STAGING THE *VOLK*: NAZI POLICY AND THE REALITY OF THEATRICAL PRODUCTION IN THREE BERLIN THEATRES, 1933-1944

by

HILLARY A. ROSENBERG

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2010

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Marvin Carlson

_____	_____
Date	Chair of Examining Committee

David Savran

_____	_____
Date	Executive Officer

Daniel Gerould

Judith Milhous

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

STAGING THE *VOLK*: NAZI POLICY AND THE REALITY OF THEATRICAL PRODUCTION IN THREE BERLIN THEATRES, 1933-1944

by

Hillary A. Rosenberg

Advisor: Professor Marvin Carlson

Although theatrical production flourished during Nazi Germany, resulting in tens of thousands of performance events, there is very little English language scholarship on theatre in Nazi Germany. The definitive theatre history textbook, Oscar Brockett's *History of the Theatre*, barely mentions this eleven year period. If the period *is* mentioned in theatre history surveys, there is the implication that theatrical production during this time must be either morally bankrupt or artistically inferior and is therefore unworthy of further study. This viewpoint is far too simplistic, and there is a need for a more in-depth examination of the theatre produced during the Third Reich.

For the Nazis, creating a national, Aryan identity was the centerpiece of their political vision. The theatre offered the regime an incredibly useful tool. On the stage, the German identity could go beyond mere description and become flesh and blood. But to what extent was this vision of a staged national identity actually carried out on the German stage?

In this study, I examine several productions at three theatres in Berlin: the Theater des Volkes, the Deutsches Theater, and the Berliner Staatstheater. Each of these theatres had direct ties to high-ranking Nazi officials and they were offered up as the jewels in the crown of the Nazi theatrical establishment. Because of this connection, productions at these theatres provide effective case studies for interrogating the relationship between the regime and theatrical production.

In the first chapter I will explore the National Socialist theatrical ideology and examine how this ideology was translated into political policy. Each of the remaining three chapters will then focus on one particular theatre to investigate how this policy shaped performance. How (if at all) did these theatres with such close connections to the Nazi regime express National Socialist ideology against the shifting framework of the official cultural policies of the Third Reich?

By combining a study of the organizational practices and political ideology of the Nazi theatre with an analysis of the performances that took place in those theatres, I will present a critical analysis of the theatrical in light of the political.

Acknowledments

There are many people I would like to thank who have helped me throughout the course of my research and writing. I would like to thank the faculty of the Theatre Program at the Graduate Center, who presented me with the Vera Roberts Dissertation Award and the International Theatre-Going Award. Both of these awards helped me to fund my archival research in Berlin. While in Berlin, I received invaluable advice and assistance from Dr. Erika Fischer-Lichte. I would also like to thank the many archivists and librarians at the Deutsches Theater, the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung at the Freie Universität, the Akademie der Künste and the Stadtmuseum Berlin--Landmuseum für Kultur und Geschichte Berlins for their help in locating archival material. I would not have been able to write this dissertation without the help of Sabine Krüger, who helped me locate and photocopy newspaper reviews that I could not access during my time in Berlin.

Within the Theatre Program at the Graduate Center, I was very lucky to have the support and advice of my classmates Sharon Green, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, and Marion Wilson. I would like to thank Lynette Gibson for her tireless work on behalf of the students of the Theatre Program, and for helping me handle any issues that arose while I was working outside of New York City. Judith Milhous and Daniel Gerould offered me insightful critique of my work throughout the writing process. And I would like to especially thank my advisor, Marvin Carlson, for his thoughtful comments, his advice, and his extreme patience as I worked my way through the process of writing the dissertation.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank my parents, David and Alice

Arlen, and my sister, Gabrielle Arlen, for their unwavering support. I would like to thank my children, Benjamin and Talia, for understanding when I had to write instead of play. But most of all, I would like to thank my husband, Jason, for his support, his advice, and his patience during this long process.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In his work *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, George L. Mosse writes "The theater played a vital part in National Socialism; indeed, it was one of Hitler's dominant passions. No German régime in the past did more to further the theater than the Third Reich."[1] Hundreds of new plays, as well as "acceptable" plays of world dramatic literature, were produced by Germany's subsidized and commercial theatres, and for the most part the theatre of the Third Reich remained vital until the war brought about the closure of the theatres in 1944. Glen Gadberry, in his introduction to *Theatre in the Third Reich, the Prewar Years*, writes that the theatre did indeed function; in fact, it flourished. According to Gadberry, there were tens of thousands of performance events in the Third Reich.[2]

Why did the theatre occupy such an important place in Nazi Germany? Adolf Hitler was fascinated by all of the arts, and envisioned himself as an artist. Dr. Joseph Goebbels, who later became head of the *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (Reich Ministry of Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment), wrote a novel and was very interested in the visual arts. But beyond the personal interest of the National Socialist elite, the theatre, like all the arts, was seen by the Nazis as an important site for spreading propaganda and educating the masses. Hitler, and later official Nazi policy, envisioned the theatre as a public space

[1] George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig Inc., 1999), 157.

[2] Glen W. Gadberry, "Introduction: The Year of Power—1933," in *Theatre in the Third Reich, The Prewar Years: Essays on Theatre in Nazi Germany*, ed. Glen W. Gadberry (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 2.

in which a new national identity could be staged. The theatre was seen as a particularly important tool for this job.

In this study, I will examine significant productions at three theatres in Berlin—the Theater des Volkes, the Deutsches Theater, and the Berliner Staatstheater—in light of the National Socialist theatre and cultural policies.

My work in this area began when I decided to research censorship in totalitarian regimes, part of my ongoing interest in the intersection between theatre and political power. Nazi Germany seemed a fairly obvious place for me to start, as one of the most famous dictatorships of the modern era. But during the course of my initial research, I was struck by two things. The first was the lack of scholarly work in English on theatre during Nazi Germany. Most English language theatre history books completely ignore this period, as if theatre in Germany stopped in 1933 and began again in the summer of 1945. Oscar Brockett's *History of the Theatre* only devotes five lines to the German theatre from 1933-1945. Glen Gadberry addresses this vacuum in his article "The Theatre of the Third Reich: Issues and Concerns."[3] He surveys major theatre history texts, pointing out that each one either ignores or makes prejudicial statements about theatre in Nazi Germany. As Gadberry points out in *Theatre in the Third Reich*, seldom has a theatre under such extraordinary conditions been so neglected by theatre historians.[4]

This, despite the general fascination with the Nazi era and the other art forms

---

[3] In *Nordic Theatre Studies—Special International Issue: New Directions in Theatre Research.* Proceedings of the XIth FIRT/IFTR Congress, Stockholm, 1989, ed. William Sauter (Copenhagen, 1990): 75-78.

[4] Gadberry, "Introduction: The Year of Power—1933," 2.

of that period. While the marches and pageants of Nazi Germany have been analyzed as performance pieces, performances within theatre buildings themselves still need to be examined for an English-speaking audience. A scarcity of English material regarding theatre in this period also exists in the field of Nazi studies. There are books, written by art historians, political scientists, and historians, focusing on film, radio, literature, and visual art.[5] But the theatre is an area of Nazi studies that still needs elaboration if we are to get a better understanding of Nazi culture.

The first major English language book on the topic wasn't published until 1984. Bruce Zortman's *Hitler's Theater: Ideological Drama in Nazi Germany* deals almost exclusively with the *Thingspielplatz,* the large outdoor ampitheatres created for the epic national dramas written in the early years of the Third Reich, and the plays staged there.[6] Since the *Thingspiel* themselves were out of fashion within a few years of the regime, the study is limited to the first few years of the Third Reich.

Gadberry is the most prolific author in this area. He is the editor of *Theatre in the Third Reich, the Prewar Years*, a collection of ten essays which focuses on specific actors, towns, playwrights, genres (such as plays about World War I), and theatres. This book is an extremely useful place to start; unfortunately, the format of the study precludes any in-depth analysis of the many topics introduced. Gadberry

---

[5] For studies of art in the Third Reich, see *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron (New York: Abrams, 1991); *Hitler and the Artists*, Henry Grosshans (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983); "German Expressionism in the Plastic Arts and Naziism: A Confrontation of Idealists," Robert A. Pois in *German Life and Letters* 21.3 (April 1968): 204-214; *Art as Politics I n the Third Reich*, Jonathan Petropoulis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). For information on film, see *Film in the Third Reich*, David Stewart Hull (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969).

[6] Bruce Harold Zortman, *Hitler's Theater: Ideological Drama in Nazi Germany* (El Paso, TX: Firestein Books, 1984).

has also published several articles in *Text and Presentation*, focusing on particular texts or performances. Unfortunately, the book length study and translations that he is currently working on have yet to be published.

Another collection of essays, *Theatre Under the Nazis*, was published in 2000.[7] This book includes six chapters, covering some of the same ground covered in Gadberry's collection, but because there are fewer chapters each one tends to be a more in-depth study of a specific topic; for example, one chapter by John London (who is also the editor) looks at non-German theatre in Nazi Germany. While this book tends to be more thorough than Gadberry's due to the number of chapters, it is still bound by the confines of its format and causes the reader (or at least this reader) to long for a book length study of any one of the topics included in the book.

Fascism and Theatre; Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945, yet another collection of essays, is edited by Günter Berghaus (who is best known for his work on the futurists). It includes two essays that deal directly with theatre in Nazi Germany, both of which are actually translations of German articles: Barbara Panse's "Censorship in Nazi Germany: The Influence of the Reich's Ministry of Propaganda on German Theatre and Drama, 1933-1945," and Bettina Schültke's "The Municipal Theatre in Frankfurt-on-the-Main: A Provincial Theatre under National Socialism."[8] Both of these essays focus

---

[7] John London, ed. *Theatre Under the Nazis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

[8] Barbara Panse, "Censorship in Nazi Germany: The Influence of the Reich's Ministry of Propaganda on German Theatre and Drama, 1933-1945," trans. Meg Mumford, in *Fascism and Theatre; Comparitive Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996),140-156, and Bettina Schültke, "The Municipal Theatre in Frankfurt-on-the-Main: A Provincial Theatre under National Socialism," trans. Laura Tate and Günter Berghaus, 157-171.

almost exclusively on the organizational structures of their respective organizations, although they both do discuss how the repertory choices were shaped by the political situation.

While I was working on this study, two new books in this area were published. The first, Elisabeth Schulz Hostetter's *The Berlin State Theater Under the Nazi Regime: A Study of the Administration, Key Productions, and Critical Responses from 1933-1944*, is a thorough study of the Staatstheater from the Nazi takeover through the closure of the theatres.[9] After a lengthy examination of the theatre's history, Hostetter divides the productions of the Nazi period into propaganda plays, classical plays, and plays of resistance, offering in-depth analysis of one or two plays in each category. While I found this to be an extremely useful resource, it didn't probe the inherent contradictions it uncovered in a satisfying manner, and its sole focus on the Staatstheater left me wanting to know if other Berlin theatres reacted to the Third Reich in a similar manner.

Gerwin Strobl's *The Swastika and the Stage, German Theatre and Society, 1933-1945*, in direct contrast, is a very broad examination of the period.[10] Strobl breaks his study into overall themes he sees within the period, using specific examples of performances throughout Germany and interactions between performers and politicians to highlight his points. What was most useful to my own research was his extensive examination of the nationalist movement and nationalist playwriting

[9] Elisabeth Schulz Hostetter, *The Berlin State Theater Under the Nazi Regime: A Study of the Administration, Key Productions, and Critical Responses from 1933-1944* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

[10] Gerwin Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage. German Theatre and Society, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

prior to 1933. While his focus was much broader than that of my own research, I found his statemetns about the nature of the theatre in the Third Reich to be interesting and well argued, and his own work echoed my frustration with the perception of the Nazi theatre as provincial and, quite simply, bad and therefore unworthy of in-depth study.

Wayne Kvam's article "The Nazification of Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater in Berlin" in the October 1998 issue of *Theatre Journal* looks at the period immediately following the *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power); unfortunately, his study does not go on to examine how the Deutsches Theater changed yet again under the leadership of Heinz Hilpert.[11]

There are several chapters of larger works that address Nazi theatre. Richard Grunberger's *A Social History of the Third Reich* includes a chapter on theatre, although most of the chapter is concerned with the *Thingspiel*, the outdoor dramatic form that was to recreate ancient Nordic performances, its failure, and the lack of successful Nazi playwrights.[12] William Grange, whose essay focusing on the work of Hilpert, Fehling, and Gründgens during this period is included in Gadberry's *Theatre in the Third Reich, the Prewar Years*, has also written the book *Partnership in the German theatre: Zuckmayer and Hilpert, 1925-1961*, which includes Hilpert's work during the Nazi period.[13] Cecil Davies's *Volksbühne Movement—A History*, devotes

---

[11] Wayne Kvam, "The Nazification of Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater Berlin." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 3 (October 1988): 357-74.

[12] Richard Grunberger, *The Twelve Year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany 1933-1945* (New York: Holt, Reinhardt and Winston, 1971).

[13] William Grange, *Partnership in the German Theatre: Zuckmayer and Hilpert, 1925-1961* (New York: P. Lang Publishing, 1991).

five pages to the Volksbühne under the Nazis, focusing mainly on its dissolution and takeover by the Nazis without an in-depth analysis of what was produced during this period.[14] John Willett's *The Theatre of the Weimar Republic* ends with an examination of how the Nazi regime altered the Weimar theatre, including an examination of Hitler's views on the theatre and a discussion of which major actors, playwrights and directors fled Germany and which chose to stay.[15] He also provides extensive appendices that list the majority of German speaking theatres and works produced in these theatres; all appendices include the Nazi period. Wilhelm Hortmann's *Shakespeare on the German Stage: The Twentieth Century* includes a chapter on the Nazi period.[16] But because these are basically chapters of larger works, the information is condensed by necessity and only served to sketch a picture in rather broad strokes of a theatre and a situation that I instinctively felt was complex and layered.

Not surprisingly, German scholars have generated the majority of scholarship on theatre under the Nazis. In his article "The Theatre of the Third Reich: Issues and Concerns," Gadberry writes that "German study has been principally concerned with political or organizational structure,"[17] a statement that I have found to be accurate, although I would add that German scholarship is also concerned with biographies of the leading figures of the period. Typical German books on Nazi theatre written in

---

[14] Cecil Davies, *The Volksbühne Movement: A History* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000).

[15] John Willett, *The Theatre of the Weimar Republic* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988).

[16] Wilhelm Hortmann, *Shakespeare on the German Stage: the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[17] Gadberry, "The Theatre of the Third Reich: Issues and Concerns," 75.

the 1960s through the 1980s include Joseph Wulf's *Theater und Film im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation*, which consists of letters and memos between Nazi officials and artists; K. H. Ruppel's *Großes Berliner Theater*, a collection of reviews and production photographs from 1935-1942; and Jutta Wardetzky's *Theaterpolitik im faschistischen Deutschland: Studien und Dokumente.*[18] Wardetzky's work contains more critical analysis than the previous two examples, but it is clearly written from a Communist point of view which dominates the tenor of the book. It is very focused on the theatre laws themselves, without analyzing in any in-depth way how those laws affected actual performances. It is only in recent years that more critical examinations of the productions themselves have become more prevalent, with the publication of books such as Hans Daiber's *Schaufenster der Diktatur: Theater im Machtbereich Hitlers*.[19] Yet although German scholarship of this period has become more sophisticated, it is still inaccessible to the majority of English speaking readers.

The second thing that struck me during this initial phase of my research was the seeming fluidity of performance within Nazi Germany. When I began to look at theatre censorship in Nazi Germany, I expected to find a very rigid system with no room for any deviation from the accepted norm. There were certain rules, and if you broke those rules you at least would be fired, if not shipped off to a concentration camp. I knew of several writers, directors and actors who were murdered or sent to

[18] Joseph Wulf, *Theater und Film im Dritten Reich: Eine Dokumentation* (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn Verlag, 1964); K.H. Ruppel, *Großes Berliner Theater* (Hannover: Friedrich Verlag, 1962); Jutta Wardetzky, *Theaterpolitik im faschistischen Deutschland: Studien und Dokumente* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1983).

[19] Hans Daiber, *Schaufenster der Diktatur: Theater im Machtbereich Hitlers* (Stuttgart: Günther Neske Verlag, 1995).

the camps in the early years of the regime, and I just assumed that this was the situation throughout Germany. And while I did find that no theatre ever submitted the name of a banned play for production to the Ministry of Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment, I kept coming across anecdotes of performers, directors and designers who tested the boundaries of "acceptable" Nazi theatre in various ways and got away with it. The fact that my initial expectation proved to be wrong further piqued my curiosity. How many of my other assumptions about theatre in Nazi Germany would prove to be false as well?

As my review of existing scholarship shows, the study of Nazi theatre is an area that is ripe for investigation and exploration. Almost everyone I spoke with as I began my research had the same reaction: they knew almost nothing of the period, and they were making assumptions based on what they knew of Nazi art and film, or in some cases, films that included fictionalized accounts of Nazi theatre. I believe there is a need to examine the realities of theatrical production in Nazi Germany. Theatre after the seizure of power was not a static entity, and although it might make us uncomfortable, the assumption commonly espoused in theatre history surveys—that all theatrical productions during the Nazi period were inferior—is a false one.

This assumption was once mirrored in the scholarship on futurism in Italy and socialist realism in the Soviet Union. Because futurism was connected, at least initially, with fascism, and socialist realism with communism, these theatrical forms were often dismissed or ignored as worthless, or perhaps more accurately, not worthy of study because the systems that produced them were ethically and morally void. However, in the past twenty years there has been a concerted effort to examine these

forms and their connections to the political regimes with which they are so closely connected. This kind of examination must also occur in regards to the theatre of Nazi Germany.

The theatre of the Third Reich serves as a bridge between the theatre of Weimar and post-World War II Germany. To study either of these specific historical moments without considering a period that is both the termination of one moment and the genesis of the next is to disconnect the theatre of the Weimar Republic and post-war Germany from their greater historical context. The period between 1933 and 1945 is, unarguably, one of the defining eras in twentieth century Germany, and a thorough study of twentieth century German theatre cannot ignore what was a very active period in theatrical production.

But ultimately, as I stated earlier, *I* was attracted to this area of study because of power, or more specifically, the intersection of political power and the theatre. The study of Nazi theatre can teach us a great deal about how theatrical communities operate in the most extreme of totalitarian governments. But it can also teach us more about those governments themselves. The theatre is an area of Nazi studies that still needs elaboration if we are to get a better understanding of Nazism itself, an understanding which I believe to be crucial. As Roger Griffin, author of *The Nature of Fascism* and *Fascism*, writes in an article on fascism and theatre, "To study fascist theatre is to bring together the definitional, the methodological, the political, the social-psychological and the cultural-historical in a comparative perspective, and thus leads to an unusually sophisticated perspective on the fascist era as a whole."[20]

[20] Roger Griffin, "Staging the Nation's Rebirth: Politics and Aesthetics of Performance in the Context of Fascist Studies," in *Fascism and Theatre, Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and*

For the Nazis, creating a national, Aryan identity was the centerpiece of their political vision, a way to gather and then solidify support. The theatre offered the regime an incredibly useful tool. On the stage, the German identity could go beyond mere description, it could become flesh and blood. That quality of "liveness" added a powerful emotional quality and a sense of community, and community, or *Volk* (people), was the cornerstone of Germany.[21]

I am interested in interrogating to what extent the vision of a staged national identity was actually carried out in these theatres. How did the Nazis envision a national theatre? Did the theatre described by Nazi politicians, critics and ideologues actually exist? The Nazis wanted to use the theatre to solidify and support their political regime, but were there instances when the theatre in fact did the opposite, at the very least questioning the political status quo?

Through a critical analysis of theatrical productions at three theatres, I will explore the tensions in a theatre that was both connected to, reflected, and resisted the ideology of the Third Reich. In the first chapter I will explore the National Socialist theatrical ideology, and examine how this ideology was translated into political policy. Each of the remaining three chapters will then focus on one particular theatre to investigate how this policy shaped performance. By combining a study of the organizational practices and political ideology of the Nazi theatre with an analysis of the performances that took place in those theatres, I will present a critical analysis of the theatrical in light of the political.

Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945, ed. Günter Berghaus (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 27.

[21] See Chapter 1 for further discussion of the *Volk*.

I will not be examining the entire repertoires of these theatres in-depth; instead I am focusing on important productions at each theatre that will help me highlight significant themes, issues and points in my argument. As Thomas Postlewait discussed in his presentation at the 2000 conference of the American Society for Theatre Research, I will place these performances within a cultural context.[22] Placing the event (of the theatrical performance) within a cultural context will help me to gain a better understanding of that event, and hopefully the examination of both the event and its context will illuminate this historical moment.

There is also a practical component to my choice of productions. Most of my primary research consists of newspaper reviews and archival production photographs and programs. For some productions, I simply could not find enough documentation to support a nuanced examination.

I am looking at productions over the entire course of the Nazi regime, from 1933 to the closing of the theatres in 1944, whereas most of the scholarship that I have encountered focuses either on the pre-war or the war period.[23] The political landscape of Nazi Germany was not a smooth one, and as the solidification and consolidation of power was achieved, the language of national identity began to change. There was another change after the start of World War II, and yet another shift as the war started to go badly. My primary reason for analyzing productions throughout the whole regime is to examine how the staging of the *Volk* changed along

[22] Thomas Postlewait, "From Event to Context to Event: A Problem in Theatre Methodology" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Theatre Research, New York, NY, November 2000).

[23] While several sources acknowledge that changes in the war situation caused changes in the acceptable repertoire, they do not go into any more depth about what other changes occurred due to the changes in the political arena.

with the political situation.

I have chosen to focus on three theatres within Berlin. I wanted to focus on the capital city, rather than on the whole of Germany or other German cities, for two reasons. Quite practically, Berlin was the theatrical center of Germany. The city was home to the most famous directors, actors and designers working in the country. It was where the action was, and the number of theatres operating in the city presented me with a large and diverse pool of theatres from which to cull my research material. But my reasons also stretch beyond the practical to the symbolic. Berlin held a paradoxical status for many of the Nazi elite. Early Nazi writings and speeches revealed a love/hate relationship with modernity. They idealized the German peasant who worked the land that was the very soul and strength of Germany, yet they embraced modern technology, especially in military and industrial matters. On the one hand, Nazi literature reviled the modern, decadent urban center that for them epitomized the Weimar Republic. On the other hand, once the Nazis gained power they were eager to reclaim Berlin from its recent Weimar depravity. Did nationality lie within the peasant countryside, or within the capital city of the Reich, home to the political center of the regime? Through the theatres of Berlin the Nazis were able to avoid reconciling this paradox, allowing the Nazis to embrace both the city and the countryside. They could stage the national rural ideal of Nazi propaganda to further cultivate an image of the *Volk*, an image that had the potential to be seen by a large and varied audience with all the modern technology the theatres of the city had to offer. The regime also saw the great cultural and artistic traditions of Berlin as a way to prove to the world that they were not peasant brutes, but that they too could

appreciate fine culture. The theatres in Berlin became "the jewel in its [the regime's] crown, a crown it wanted to wear proudly before the eyes of the theatrical world."[24]

Earlier I mentioned my surprise at discovering instances where theatre artists challenged or questioned the regime. These instances overwhelmingly occurred in Berlin theatres, yet another reason for my focus on the theatres within the city. That this type of leeway was allowed at theatres that had a more direct connection with powerful Nazis is no coincidence. I am focusing on three theatres that each raise particular questions about the relationship between the regime and theatre because of their specific connections to political figures. The Theater des Volkes, the renamed Grosses Schauspielhaus, served as the first theatre for the *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy), an organization which was created to assure workers access to German culture. It was the ultimate propaganda tool; its size allowed it to reach extremely large audiences, (a useful tool in and of itself), but beyond that, the Nazis could point out that it was reaching Germans who, according to the Nazis, had been ignored from the elitist Weimar culture.[25] This role gave the theatre a great deal of prominence, and it became a centerpiece for Goebbels's propaganda efforts. The Deutsches Theater, under the political control of Goebbels and the Ministry of Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment, and the Berliner Staatstheater, under the control of Hermann Göring due to his role as *Reichsministerpräsident (*Minister President) of Prussia, became sites for a power struggle between Goebbels and

[24] William Grange, "Ordained Hands on the Altar of Art: Gründgens, Hilpert, and Fehling in Berlin," in *Theatre in the Third Reich,* 79.

[25] This take on Weimar theatre conveniently dismissed the vibrant Marxist workers theatre that produced artists such as Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator.

Göring. Both men wanted to exert their dominance over the theatres in Berlin, and they competed to retain the best actors and directors working in Germany, each wanting to one-up the other. The presence of the Nazi elite and what influence that presence created further complicates the question of how effectively the theatres reflected Nazi ideology.

While this project, and my investigation of the connection between the state and the theatre, has certainly been influenced by the work of the New Historicists and cultural materialists such as Jean E. Howard, I am wary of falling into the common binary often espoused by the New Historicists which dictates that most theatrical events either reify or resist the political regime. As Postlewait argues in the article "Writing History Today" in the November 2000 issue of *Theatre Survey*, "As we move from events to paradigms, we are often seduced by grand, singular ideas which we tend to reify as organizing principles for interpretation."[26]

When I discussed this problem with Postlewait at the American Society for Theatre Research conference, he said that this organizing principle of all theatre clearly supporting or opposing the government, which is often applied to theatre in the English Renaissance, is actually much more accurate within a twentieth century totalitarian paradigm. And that grand idea—the theatre was either for or against the Nazis—is a comforting and commonly held belief. Historian Alan E. Steinweis points out that:

> One of the most persistent generalizations to have emerged from almost five decades of postwar research on Nazi Germany is the notion of a German artistic and cultural establishment at the mercy of a

[26] Thomas Postlewait, "Writing History Today," in *Theatre Survey* 41.2 (November 2000), *27*.

> totalitarian regime determined to mobilize the arts in pursuit of its own ideological ends. Explicitly or implicitly, historians have characterized the relationship between the regime and the art world as one in which a powerful state-party apparatus manipulated malleable and sometimes enthusiastic artists.[27]

This view allows us to condemn the "bad guys" (the Nazi regime and Steinweis's "enthusiastic artists"), while sympathizing with the good guys, the artists manipulated by those same bad guys. Yet although that position is a comfortable one and one that I am loathe to abandon (I find that I always yearn for black and white narrative structure when it comes to the Nazis), I find it inherently problematic. This organizing principle demands that every theatre was either completely for or completely against the Nazi regime, but that conclusion is simply naïve and does not take into account the day to day obstacles faced by artists trying to survive and operate within a totalitarian society. If a director stages a production that challenged the status quo and then turns around and stages a play by a Nazi playwright, how does his theatre fit into such a black and white model? If a man secretly employs non-Aryans in the theatre but stages work that does not challenge the political status quo, where does he fit into this binary system? The very circumstances under which these plays were produced lead to a question that naturally resists this binary model: could an artist be against National Socialism and still produce plays in a National Socialist theatre? Or, put another way, did the simple act of creating performances within a theatre regulated by the Nazis serve as a reification of the regime?

As I looked at pictures and programs from various productions, trying to determine if and how the ideals of a Nazi theatre were made flesh and blood, a

[27] Alan E. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1.

question kept coming to the forefront, even though it was not a question that I had originally considered in my research: can a theatre or a theatre artist remain apolitical when the government has so overtly politicized the theatre? Is the avoidance of outwardly political performances, whether they be supportive or critical of the regime, ultimately a political statement? A fact of survival, or a failure of morality? Can we even approach this question with any sense of objectivity, with other pictures, pictures of camps and bodies, burned into our minds? Ultimately, these are the lingering questions that hovered in the background as I examined how (or if) the vision of a Nazi Germany was staged on three stages in Berlin.

Chapter One: Nazi Theatre Policy

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, the Party's ideologues had the opportunity to turn their philosophies of the theatre into actual legal practice and policy. But bringing together diverse visions of what a National Socialist theatre should look like into a policy that could be implemented by the new government was not an easy task, and was marked by infighting and jockeying for political position. The messy nature of the creation of an official theatrical policy, along with the continually changing nature of that policy, foreshadowed the difficulties the Reich would face in implementing some of their visions for the National Socialist theatre on the Berlin stage.

In order to study the laws created to shape and control the theatres of the Reich, one must first look at the National Socialist theories of the theatre that shaped them. Not surprisingly, most of these theories were reactionary in nature, a radicalization of conservative theatre-goers response to the tumult of the Weimar Republic.

The Weimar Republic lasted only fourteen years—from 1919 to 1933. Yet in that brief time span, Germany as a country experienced wildly erratic highs and lows: from the defeat and humiliation of World War I and economic crisis to the "golden years" of the twenties, from mass unemployment to economic stabilization. This roller coaster finally culminated in the highly politicized, final years of the Republic that led to the acceptance of National Socialism. The theatre of the Weimar Republic closely mirrored these political and economic phases.[1]

[1] This connection between the political/economic phases of the Weimar Republic and the theatre of the Weimar Republic is explored in depth in John Willett's *The Theatre of the Weimar*

John Willett writes that "If the Republic itself was the product of the First World War—and of Germany's defeat in that war—so, too, was its theatre."[2] The Expressionist theatre in post World War I Germany was born out of the defeat of 1918 and the revolutionary phase that led to the formation of the Republic. Post-War Expressionism's tone was anti-war, and as British writer Huntly Carter pointed out, Germany utilized the theatre "as a powerful instrument of refinement, and an unerring guide to the way out of the terrible chaos" of defeat and disillusionment.[3]

As the economy began to stabilize, Expressionism fell from favor, and a new realism, or Neue Sachlichkeit, was seen on German stages. This was followed by a new prosperity, a period often called the "golden twenties," which would last until the stock market crash of 1929. This led to a new right-wing establishment—the landowners, the army, the industrialists, and the nationalists achieved stability and prosperity—which in turn fueled the box office. But at the same time, a sense of social opposition remained. As Willett writes, the establishment was so comfortable that they put up with or ignored the social criticism.[4] This led, on the one hand, to a boom in opera and light entertainment, and on the other, to the political works of Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator.

The crash of 1929 was devastating to the German economy and to the Weimar Republic itself. The coalition of democratic parties imploded, and President Paul von Hindenburg's solution was to govern like a Kaiser—ignore the Reichstag and rule by

---

Republic (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988).

[2] Willett, 53.

[3] Quoted in Willet, 53.

[4] Willett, 96.

presidential decree. By the end of 1931 unemployment had doubled; the *Bühnengenossenschaft* (Society of German Theatre Employees) published statistics in 1932 citing unemployment rates for all categories of theatre personnel that had climbed to 44 percent.[5] Extreme nationalism was on the rise, police censorship had been reintroduced, and political violence increased.

Many right-wing nationalist political parties saw this collapse as their chance to gain power and alter the political landscape of the liberal, democratic Weimar Republic. One of these groups was the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or the Nazi party, which had formed in Munich in 1919.[6] The Nazis were extremely nationalistic, blaming Jews and Communists, along with the "November criminals" (those responsible for the Weimar Republic), for all of Germany's ills.

From the beginning, the Nazis were concerned by what they viewed to be the collapse of German culture during the Weimar Republic. They also wrote and spoke a great deal about what the German theatre *should* be and would be in a National Socialist Germany. This discussion of German culture was so central to the Nazi vision of a new Germany that it was included in the earliest Nazi manifesto. Point 23 of their 25-point Party Program of 1920 demanded "legal action against a tendency in art and literature which undermines our national life, and the closing of cultural

---

[5] Alan E. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 15.

[6] As the subject of this thesis is not the early history and rise of the Nazi party, I am not giving a detailed account of the early years of the Nazi party and their rise to power. For more information on this subject, see Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), William L. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History* (London: Vintage, 1996). These are only a starting point, as there are literally hundreds of books and articles dealing with various aspects of this topic.

events violating the preceding demands." As Erhard Bahr points out in his examination of Nazi cultural politics, this would expand and become the core of Nazi cultural policy—all that was missing were the criteria for what constitutes the "undermining" tendencies and the means of suppressing these cultural events.[7] The inclusion of this point in the earliest Party manifesto foreshadows the prominent place held by the theatre in Nazi policy and propaganda.

Why was culture in general, and theatre in particular, so important to the Nazis? In *A History of Fascism*, Stanley Payne remarks that P. Reichel has concluded that "to a great extent National Socialism—perhaps more than any other system of domination in modern times—tried to define and legitimate itself by its art and its mass culture."[8] Upon reflection, this isn't that surprising, given the place of the arts in German culture. Gerwin Strobl points out that German national identity has historically centered on culture.[9] Strobl goes on to say that Lessing's project of a national theatre preceded political unification. As Alan Steinweis explains in his book on the *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Culture Chamber), German society was "saturated by art at many levels of its everyday life and nurtured on a long tradition of reverence for the arts," so it "…lent itself especially well to politicization strategies employing pictorial, theatrical, musical, and even architectural weapons."[10] The

---

[7] Erhard Bahr, "Nazi Cultural Politics: Intentionalism vs. Functionalism," in *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, ed. Glenn R. Cuomo (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 8.

[8] Quoted in Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 197.

[9] Gerwin Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage. German Theatre and Society, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007).

[10] Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 20.

Nazis recognized the power of a theatrical image or experience, and they understood that the theatre could provide them with a strong weapon for recruiting supporters. Theatrical performance, with its immediate connection between the audience and live actors (as opposed to film), gave the Nazis a platform for staging their ideal version of the German nation and German values.

Certain aspects of what a Nazi theatrical policy would look like fell easily into place, such as the need to create bureaucratic organizations to control the theatre and the necessary removal of non-Aryans from theatrical life. Describing a theatre that would promote Germany's "national life" proved more difficult. Although the official pronouncements about a Nazi theatre were couched in sweeping, epic terminology, any actual policy about what "Nazi drama" should look like was never clearly defined and was often contradictory and unattainable. In addition, cultural policies kept shifting with the political winds. But despite these difficulties, the creation of a Nazi theatre policy became an important objective for the government.

One clear bedrock of Nazi ideology that influenced theatrical policy was the concept of the *Volk*. *Volk* is commonly translated as "people," but the term implies more than that. George L. Mosse, in *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, writes that ever since the birth of German romanticism in the late eighteenth century:

> "Volk" signified the union of a group of people with a transcendental "essence." …it was fused to man's innermost nature, and represented the source of his creativity, his depth of feeling, his individuality, and his unity with other members of the Volk.[11]

[11] George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 4.

This earlier *völkisch* ideology became the foundation for the Nazi idea of what constituted Germany's "national life." It tied together the most important aspects of the Nazi worldview, ardent nationalism with racial purity. One could not be a member of the *Volk* simply by virtue of one's citizenship. The "transcendental essence" necessary for inclusion in the *Volk* was based on the nature of racial heritage and blood purity.

This idea of the *Volk* became central to Nazi ideology, and eventually became the foundation of their vision of the theatre. The stage was a public space where the history and the triumph of the *Volk* could be staged. Dramaturg Klaus Jedzek argued that theatre was the property of the *Volk*, which in turn encompassed a broad definition. He wrote:

> People (*Volk*) are not a proletarian class. People are not the bourgeois upper strata of society in tails and dinner-jackets. People are the unity of feeling, of language, of piousness/uprightness, of sadness, of humour and of happiness. *People are a unity of a feeling of being alive* (*Lebensgefühl*).[12]

His definition stresses the unity of the people, offering a vision of a utopian society where class and money are unimportant. At the same time, his comments illustrate a specific need among Nazi ideologues to distance themselves from both the communists and the liberal bourgeoisie, communities seen as enemies of the German people. In actuality, Nazism appropriated many of the values expressed by the German bourgeoisie—hard work, discipline, family integrity—and turned them into a cornerstone of Nazi ideology. This appropriation, as I will discuss later in this work, would be commonplace in Nazi practice.

---

[12] Quoted in John London, ed. *Theatre Under the Nazis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 17.

Adolf Hitler, serving a prison sentence for his part in the failed *putsch* of November 1923, expounds on these *völkisch* theories and lays out his vision of a new Germany and his place within it in the book *Mein Kampf*. He details what he feels is wrong with Weimar Germany, giving extra attention to race and its importance in creating and maintaining national character and identity. In this large work we can more clearly see the seeds of the Third Reich and the "ideal" Germany in the eyes of the man who would later be its *Führer*.

The bulk of *Mein Kampf* is filled with a rabid and vitriolic anti-Semitism and anti-communism. In fact, the two are directly linked, since Hitler identified Marx as a Jew. In Hitler's diatribe against the Jews, they are blamed for everything: economic collapse, the loss of the war, the creation of the Weimar Republic, the Treaty of Versailles, Bolshevism, and what Hitler saw as the diseased state of German culture. In fact, Hitler boasts that it was his realization that the Jews were the "creators of unclean products in public artistic life" which spurred on his growing anti-Semitism. He writes, "The fact that nine tenths of all literary filth, artistic trash, and theatrical idiocy can be set to the account of a people, constituting hardly one hundredth of all the country's inhabitants, could simply not be talked away; it was the plain truth."[13]

Hitler saw the theatre as diseased and decayed. The trope of disease is used over and over again to describe the state of affairs in Weimar Germany, but it is especially prevalent in his discussion of the arts in general and of theatre specifically. Hitler said of the theatre's decline into the abyss:

> …the offerings of the stage were of such a nature that it would have

[13] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf,* trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 58.

> been more profitable for the nation to keep away from them entirely. It was a sad sign of inner decay that the youth could no longer be sent into most of these so-called 'abodes of art'—a fact which was admitted with shameless frankness by a general display of the penny-arcade warning: 'Young people are not admitted!'[14]

In the new Germany, the theatre would be cleansed of its disease and placed "in the service of a moral, political and cultural idea."[15] Hitler believed it was the state's duty to provide culture that enriched the spirit. But aside from grand generalizations about a heroic theatre that would promote and provide national unity, Hitler had no real specific visions about what that theatre would look like. Without a concrete plan for or definition of the theatre in the new Germany, Hitler's followers set out to offer a tangible cultural policy for a National Socialist regime.

The beginnings of a cultural policy began to take shape before the Nazis came to power, spearheaded by two men who emerged as ideologues of the cultural sphere. Alfred Rosenberg, the vitriolic, anti-Semitic author of *The Myths of The Twentieth Century*, founded the *Kampfbünd für deutsche Kultur* (Combat League for German Culture) in 1928 to broaden the movement's appeal among artists and the middle class. Rosenberg was deeply committed to the ideals of the *Volk* and believed that "there arises from the idea of a cultural community the duty to nurture culture."[16] He saw the Combat League's mission as the defense of the "value of the German essence" amidst the decay of Weimar Republic by promoting the "authentically native expression of German cultural life" and introducing Germans to the work of

---

[14] Ibid, 259.

[15] Ibid, 255.

[16] Robert Pois, ed. *Race and Race History, and Other Essays by Alfred Rosenberg* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 163.

important artists who had been silenced by the enemies of the *Volk*.[17]

Joseph Goebbels, the *Gauleiter* (Party district leader) of Berlin, also sought to describe the differences between the culture of Weimar and National Socialism. Not surprisingly, he also adhered to a *völkisch* view of culture, calling for a replacement of individuality and the rights of the artist with the *Volk* and the spiritual welfare of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community). Goebbels believed that the state had the obligation to advance art within this community: "Culture is the higher expression of the creative power of a nation," and the artist is "as indispensable to the state as those who provide its material existence."[18] Although the objectives of these two men were similar, they would often disagree on how these *völkisch* aims should be expressed on the stage. As the Nazis came to power and began to formulate concrete policy, whose vision of German culture would shape that policy would become a site of contention in the early years of the Third Reich.

As the Nazis continued to rise in popularity and political power, they also continued their involvement in the politics of culture. When the Depression began, the Nazis connected unemployment problems in the theatre to an "alien" presence in the cultural arena. The Nazis pointed out that "non-Germans," i.e. Jews, were taking valuable jobs away from true Germans and scaring audiences away from the theatres. As Alan Steinweis describes in his examination of eugenics in the arts, a genuine economic crisis was described in a way that made sense to those who believed in the

[17] Quoted in Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 23.

[18] From a speech reprinted in Helmut Heiber, ed. *Goebbels-Reden. Band 1: 1932-1939* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1971), 131.

notion of a grand Jewish conspiracy.[19]

The Nazis did not wait until the seizure of power to try and change cultural policy. In 1932 the Nazi delegation in the Prussian parliament submitted a bill (which did not pass) for theatre reform that would have prohibited the hiring of "ancestrally non-German stage artists." The bill also called for a ban of "theater pieces with antinational, pacifist, or morally destructive tendencies."[20] In that same year, signs of Nazi activism were visible within the Society of German Theatre Employees, with Nazi members circulating leaflets that urged opposition to the union leadership. The union decried the intrusion of political partisanship. Soon they would have no choice about the direction of the organization.

In January 1933, Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany. The Nazi seizure of power had an immediate effect on the theatre—about 4000 people connected with the theatre fled from the new dictatorship, in addition to approximately 2000 writers, motivated either by fear, disgust, or the realization that they would not be able to produce the kind of theatre they wanted without government intervention or persecution.[21]

The Nazis quickly turned to formulating their ideology into cultural policy. As historian Bogusław Drewniak writes in his work on Nazi cultural policy, the Nazis wanted to shift the theatre from the private sphere into the "focal point of a national

---

[19] Steinweis, Cultural Eugenics: Social Policy, Economic Reform, and the Purge of Jews from German Cultural Life, in *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, 26.

[20] Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 27.

[21] London, 2.

cultural policy."[22] If the theatre moved into the public sphere, it could be controlled by the government. Within three months of his appointment as Chancellor, Hitler began to enact legislative policies to "cleanse" the German theatres. On March 11, 1933, just six days after the Reichstag election of March 5, 1933, Hitler announced his intention to create a propaganda ministry. On March 13, the cabinet created the Reich Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, which would be responsible for the spiritual development of the Reich. Goebbels was named as *Reichsminister*. Soon, the ministry had a theatre section, divided into three principal bureaus. The first was in charge of personnel, the second was the dramaturgical bureau, which oversaw production questions, and the third dealt with budgets and business procedures in the German theatres. Dr. Rainer Schlösser, a collaborator of the *völkisch* press since 1924 and the cultural-political editor of the Nazi paper *Völkischer Beobachter* since 1931, was named *Reichsdramaturg*. He would be in charge of dramaturgical concerns, especially repertoire selection and play content.

In a speech to the new Reichstag on March 23, 1933, Hitler addressed the task of cleansing the arts:

> Besides sucking the political poison out of our public life the national government proposes to embark on a thorough moral cleansing of the body of our People. All our educational activity—theatre, film, literature, press, radio—will be treated as a means to this end and esteemed accordingly. All must be applied to the conservation of those eternal values that are embedded in the essence of our Peoplehood; art will always be an expression and reflection of the wishfulness or reality of an age. The world of bourgeois introspection is on the way out. Heroism is passionately asserting its claim to shape and guide the Peoples' destinies in future. It is Art's task to be an expression of this decisive spirit of the time.

[22] Bogusław Drewniak, "The Foundations of Theater Policy in Nazi Germany," trans. Glenn R. Cuomo, in *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, 72.

> [*Loud agreement from the National Socialists.*]
> Blood and race will once again become the source of artistic intuition.[23]

For Hitler, morality and the arts were intrinsically connected—theatre was a way to cleanse the morality of the *Volk*. Under National Socialism, theatre was an educational tool serving the goals of the state. Hitler used the terminology of *völkisch* ideology to articulate how the theatre would express German values, connecting art to the "essence of our Peoplehood," and making race the foundation of art.

The ministry's mandate was clear, but the creation of the ministry raised as many questions as it answered. How would art "reflect the wishfulness of the age?" Who would be in control of shaping and guiding the artistic destiny of the *Volk*? These questions were not laid to rest with Goebbels's appointment as Minister of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. As Minister President of Prussia, Hermann Göring resented Goebbels's new power and worried that the centralization would interfere with cultural policies of the federal states. But Göring's concerns were dismissed when Hitler came to Goebbels's defense, declaring that there was only one universal German culture, "which is to be determined not by ministries, but by the ideology."[24]

Although Goebbels's position was secure, the question of how Nazi ideology would be put into practice still remained. Goebbels told a group of theatre producers in Berlin that the theatre was to be consistent with the philosophy of the National Socialists. Art in general was to "be heroic; it will be like steel; it will be romantic,

---

[23] Quoted in Willett, 182.

[24] Quoted in Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 42.

non-sentimental, factual; it will be national with great pathos and at once obligatory and binding, or it will be nothing."[25] But what did that mean? In reality this statement said absolutely nothing about the shape of the new theatre. How can a play be both romantic and non-sentimental? What would these plays look like? What form would they take? It was over these questions that a fierce debate between Goebbels and Rosenberg erupted.

In April 1933, Goebbels promised that every artist was free to experiment, and in September he declared:

> German art needs fresh blood. We live in a young era. Its supporters are young, and their ideas are young. They have nothing more in common with the past, which we have left behind us. The artist who seeks to give expression to this age must also be young and he must create new forms.[26]

While this statement echoes National Socialism's focus on youth, those in Rosenberg's camp interpreted this as an endorsement of modernism, one of the enemies of Nazi culture. This interpretation was not unwarranted, as Goebbels had made statements supporting some forms of modernist visual art. Rosenberg also endorsed a return to traditional values and Germany's Nordic past. Goebbels's dismissal of the past was directly opposed to Rosenberg's romanticizing of it.

As Ehrhard Bahr explores in his analysis of Nazi cultural politics, this infighting served to radicalize the effects of Nazi policy. Rosenberg's criticism often forced Goebbels's hand, particularly in the concept of the degenerate art exhibit, an

---

[25] This speech is reprinted in *Die Nationalsozialistiche Revolution 1933,* ed. Axel Friedrichs, 3rd edn (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1938), 296.

[26] Heiber, ed. *Goebbels-Reden. Band 1: 1932-1939*, 108-9.

exhibition of modern art categorized as degenerate by the Nazis.[27] But more often than not, disputes were settled by Hitler's intervention. At the beginning, Hitler seemed to appease both camps, condemning modernist art but declaring that "today's tasks require new methods."[28] By 1934, Hitler identified two cultural dangers threatening the Reich: modernists and traditionalists. Again, he appeased both camps. But when push came to shove, as in the dispute with the federal states, Hitler supported Goebbels. Goebbels's power and responsibility increased while Rosenberg's waned, and the Combat League for German Culture was incorporated into the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German Labor Front). However, Rosenberg and his supporters would continue to attack Goebbels's policy throughout the course of the Reich, and the dispute did force Goebbels to abandon his more progressive views and embrace a more conservative outlook of the arts.[29]

Despite larger questions concerning the form of the new Nazi theatre, when the Nazis came to power there were immediate changes in the repertoires of theatres throughout Germany. The modernist works of the pre-World War I and Weimar periods were immediately blacklisted by the Nazis. The theatres quickly fell into line with whatever the Ministry declared as acceptable; extant evidence shows that no theatre ever proposed to produce a play by an "objectionable" author, and there is no

[27] Goebbels was an admirer of some modern art, but his interest in the avant-garde was not shared by the majority of the Nazi doctrinaires. Ultimately, Goebbels abandoned his support of modernist works and his ministry sponsored an exhibit showcasing and denigrating this "degenerate" art. For more on this exhibit, see "*Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, ed. Stephanie Barron (New York: Abrams, 1991).

[28] Quoted in Bahr, 15.

[29] Bogusław Drewniak calls Rainer Schlösser, the Reichsdramaturg, a "virtuoso of the Goebbels-Rosenberg balance" in "The Foundations of Theater Policy in Nazi Germany," 84.

evidence that living playwrights challenged the authority of the Ministry.[30]

The removal of these "un-German" plays left a void in the theatrical repertoire. Nazi theorists, dramatists, and policy-makers were still searching for a unique Nazi theatrical form to take their place. The result was the *Thingspiel*. In his work on the *Thingspiel*, William Niven describes how these plays were meant to serve Nazi ideology. They were to take place on vast outdoor stages

> thereby stressing the organic links between contemporary culture, Nordic nature and the glorious German past. These new plays, by using mass choruses and marching groups, would also help to foster a sense of national community among participants and encourage the audience to identify with the events on stage.[31]

Another popular genre was the *Blut und Boden*, or blood and soil play, a variation of the peasant play which stressed the connection between the German farmer and the land.

Equally important to the Nazis were the German classic playwrights, especially Schiller and Goethe, and Shakespeare, whom the Nazis regarded as kindred to the Germans. These classic playwrights were appropriated by the Nazis to give the cultural policies of the regime a sense of legitimacy. Hitler lamented that the artists of the pre-Nazi period had abandoned these three playwrights, "befouling the past."[32]

In general, the plays endorsed by the Nazis featured strong male leaders,

---

[30] Barbara Panse, "Censorship in Nazi Germany: The Influence of the Reich's Ministry of Propaganda on German Theatre and Drama, 1933-1945," trans. Meg Mumford, in *Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 142 and London, 11.

[31] William Niven, "The Birth of Nazi Drama? Thing Plays," in *Theatre under the Nazis*, 55. I will discuss the *Thingspiel* in greater detail in the following chapter.

[32] Hitler, 260.

military heroes, battles, historic themes, labor as struggle and joy, and the common *Volk* (especially farmers). Historical conflicts were portrayed so that they could be seen as what Panse calls "mile stones on the way to the creation of the German Nation State."[33] By positing historical conflicts as stepping stones to the Nazi regime, these plays endorsed the inevitability of National Socialism and reminded audiences that this new regime was merely the fulfillment of Germany's destiny.

If there was initial contention or confusion over the form of an ideal Nazi theatre, there was no such question about the role of Jews, communists, Gypsies and homosexuals. In April 1933, as a further step towards the creation of the German state, all non-Aryan civil servants were "retired" from public life. Jewish employees at theatres with national, state, or city subsidies were removed. Anyone who had read *Mein Kampf* should not have been surprised by this edict, although some were. This "retiring" of Jewish civil servants was simply a foreshadowing of things to come, both in the theatre and in Germany (and later the occupied countries). Although the complete removal of "non-Aryan" Germans from public life was not achieved immediately, the end result was never in question.

The desire to make theatre the focal point of Germany's cultural policy was clearly reflected in the budget of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. Theatre received more money than any other activity subsidized by the Ministry—even direct propaganda itself. By the end of 1943, theatre had received 26.4% of the Ministry's budget, followed by propaganda (21.8%) and film (11.5%).[34]

---

[33] Panse, 145.

[34] Drewniak, 77.

Most of this money was in the form of subsidies which had a controlling influence on the theatres. Only theatres considered to be Reich theatres, such as the Theater des Volkes, Theater des Westens and the Volksbühne in Berlin, received direct financing. Intendants, or artistic directors, even of "private" theatres, were obligated to remain in contact regarding finances, which in turn could be used to force political concessions from the theatres regarding any questionable repertoire choices or hiring practices, a fact that the Ministry fully understood. This link between subsidies and artistic control was evident in the guidelines for granting subsidies to the theatres. But the Nazis did not merely want to keep the theatres under their control. They also wanted the theatres to produce good work. According to the Ministry's guidelines, the subsidies were meant to bring "the theater to the level of performance required for cultural-political reasons."[35] For the Nazis, theatre was an aesthetic expression of Nazi ideology as well as a propaganda tool. A good performance cemented the legitimacy of the Reich and reflected the values of Germany.

Next, Goebbels and Hitler needed to "provide the institutional mechanism for centralized ministerial control."[36] In July, Hitler approved Goebbels's plans for a *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Chamber of Culture) to serve as that mechanism. Goebbels wanted a chamber that would draw upon neocorporatist tendencies already present in the cultural unions and professional organizations rather than creating and implementing a new organizational framework. Under the neocorporatist model, structures divided by occupation would represent the people. Nationalist

[35] Ibid., 78.

[36] Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 34.

neocorporatism, as advocated by the Nazis, envisioned a partial return to the medieval estates system, induced and controlled by an authoritarian government. The Nazis saw neocorporatism as a third way economically—not Marxist, but not liberal either—and it was embraced by the early Nazi platform. Goebbels envisioned the artists within the Chamber handling aesthetic and institutional details autonomously, while the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda set up general guidelines for cultural policy.

The Reich Chamber of Culture became reality in November 1933, with the presentation of the First Decree for the Implementation of the Reich Chamber of Culture Law on November 1, 1933. According to an analysis of that decree by Steinweis, the basic mission of the Chamber was "to promote German culture on behalf of the German *Volk* and the Reich, to regulate the economic and social affairs of the cultural professions, and to bring about a compromise between the groups belonging to it."[37] There were seven sub-chambers of the Reich Chamber of Culture: theatre, literature, press, radio, music, fine arts, and film. Although these sub-chambers were to be autonomous in some respects, all decisions could be negated by the president of the Chamber of Culture. All theatre professionals were "invited" to join the *Reichstheaterkammer* (Theatre Chamber), which was initially formed from the two existing theatre unions. These artists, including Jews who were members of the pre-Nazi unions, automatically found themselves members of the new Theatre Chamber. Goebbels proclaimed that he was embarking on a course that would take

[37] Quoted in Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 44.

art back to the *Volk* and the *Volk* back to art.[38] He was also creating a bureaucracy that centralized control over the arts within the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda.

Steinweis calls the mission of the Chamber of Culture a form of cultural eugenics, "simultaneously nourishing the 'healthy' and weeding out the 'unhealthy.'" The latter took the form of purges and pre-emptive censorship, while the former consisted of "work creation, professional education, certification, wage and benefit policy, and social insurance."[39] These pro-active improvements gained legitimacy for the regime among artists who did not consider themselves to be Nazis. Steinweis also notes that by addressing the major financial and structural problems of the arts, "the regime attenuated much of the psychological distress generated by political intervention, censorship, and purges."[40] Like most of German society, artists within the Chamber focused on the genuine positive gains of the Nazi regime while achieving, or attempting to achieve, a state of denial about the more disturbing aspects of Nazi rule.

Goebbels insisted that the Chamber system would be expected to police itself, and that the regime would not practice an intrusive censorship. The idea of a self-run professional organization with the support and protection of the government was welcomed even in non-Nazi circles. As difficult as it may be to believe in hindsight, the National Socialist state's ability to enact positive change within the theatre

---

[38] London, 16.

[39] Steinweis, "Cultural Eugenics," 24.

[40] Ibid., 27.

without excessively interfering was accepted at first, even though communists and other politically objectionable artists had been disappearing during these early months of the Third Reich.[41]

The business of creating a legal framework for German theatre continued in May 1934 with the passing of a special *Theatergesetz* (theatre law).[42] It officially placed all theatrical activities, both private and state operated, under the auspices of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, making all theatres subject to state artistic and racial policy. Rainer Schlösser, as Dramaturg of the Reich, would remain the chief censor, although as head of the Ministry, Goebbels assumed ultimate responsibility for all German theatre. Before the start of every season, the program of every theatre in Germany had to be presented to Schlösser for approval. Goebbels was granted the legal authority to intervene in repertoire decisions and to order a ban on performances.[43]

However, Goebbels's control was not all encompassing. Hermann Göring, as Minister President of Prussia, was given jurisdiction over the Prussian State Theatres. This territory included the important city of Berlin and the Berliner Staatstheater. In Berlin, some theatres became known as Goebbels's theatres while others were known as Göring's. The rivalry between these two men would continue to have major effects on the reality of theatrical production in Berlin, as I will discuss in later chapters. When it came to competition between Goebbels and Göring, ideology

---

[41] Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 47.

[42] For a full transcript of the Theatergesetz, see Jutta Wardetzky, *Theaterpolitik in faschistischen Deutschland* (Berlin: Henschel, 1983), 257-265.

[43] Panse, 140.

could be subsumed by the desire to win.

By 1935, Goebbels had become suspicious of the neocorporatist autonomy he had championed within the Chamber of Culture. He felt that his "magnanimity" had not been reciprocated by the seven sub-chambers, and he instituted a reorganization of the entire system. He appointed Hans Hinkel, a high ranking member of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, to the Chamber's central office to implement a purge and restructuring of the sub-chambers. Moderate officials were replaced with "ideologically" reliable people, and the administrative process became more centralized. To make sure that the sub-chambers adhered to the ideological and political mandates of the Reich, the Ministry became increasingly involved with the bureaucracies of the sub-chambers. This was accompanied by the expulsion of remaining Jews in the sub-chambers and a crack-down on art that could be deemed degenerate.[44]

Goebbels was especially displeased with the Theatre Chamber. He accused theatre managements of ignoring employee complaints, and the unions were criticized for not promoting the employment of old Nazi fighters. The *Bühnennachweis* (the official theatre employment agency) was said to be "pervaded with staff members who were politically 'intolerable,' 'non-Aryan,' and 'related to Jews.'" When Theatre Chamber president Otto Laubinger died in September 1935 after a long illness, Rainer Schlösser was appointed as president. As Dramaturg of the Reich, Schlösser was now in charge of what plays were acceptable and, as Theatre Chamber President, of handling aesthetic and institutional details. This dual appointment

[44] Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 51.

centralized control of the theatre more tightly under his, and by extension Goebbels's, authority.[45]

By 1936, the Chamber of Culture had evolved into a more centralized organ of the state, and in the process had begun the purification of the organization that its critics, especially in the Rosenberg camp, had been demanding. The Chamber could now fulfill its role of cleansing the German theatre of self-employed Jewish artists and those employed by private theatres (who were therefore not affected by the Civil Service Law of April 1933)—if they were banned from the Chamber, they could not be employed by any professional organization. In April, Hinkel announced that the Chamber had "put the stage of organization by and large behind itself," adding that the "cultural life is liberated from countless Jews and art Bolsheviks" (even though Hinkel knew that the expulsion of Jews from the Chamber was nowhere near completed).[46]

This reorganization was indicative of a larger shift in Nazi Germany. Like all fascist systems, the Nazi regime began with a gathering phase. The first few years of the regime were marked by compromise and appeasement of various camps within the party as well as members of German society on the one hand, and outspoken proclamations of Nazi ideology on the other. In 1936, the regime began to shift into a consolidation phase characterized by a more formal bureaucracy and a desire to keep the people content. Compromise became less and less necessary, as there were fewer camps to compromise among, while the government sought to maintain the general

[45] Ibid., 55.

[46] Quoted in ibid., 58.

public's approval and support.[47]

These two impulses—to consolidate power and to maintain the support of the masses—were evident in the shift within the Chamber of Culture and theatrical production. Steinweis calls the reorganization of the Chamber of Culture and the Theatre Chamber "tantamount to a new phase of *Gleichschaltung* (enforced conformity) in the arts," and sees this shift within the context of the "radicalization of the Nazi regime in the mid-1930s."[48] Organizationally, the changes within the Theatre Chamber point to a Nazi ideology which purged the modernist leanings and experimental nature of early cultural policy and followed the official party line more stringently.

Another effect of this new enforced conformity was the banning of theatre criticism. In the early years of the Reich, Nazi theatre critics were excited about the educational possibilities of theatre criticism. It would point out what was good and bad, what made a play valuable for the nation, and thus would help build a national German theatre. But by 1935 Goebbels was bemoaning the fact that anyone could write whatever they wanted, regardless of what was best for the German people.[49] If all productions had been approved by the Nazi government via the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, then a negative critique could be seen as a negative critique of the regime itself.

In May 1936, Goebbels issued a proclamation banning the writing of critical

---

[47] The terms "gathering phase" and "consolidation phase" were used by Vivian Patraka in her comments on my early work on this chapter.

[48] Ibid., 51; 59.

[49] London, 21.

reviews on the night of a performance. He justified his position, declaring "Artistic criticism no longer exists for its own sake. In future one ought not to degrade or criticize a well-meaning or quite respectable artistic achievement for the sake of a witty turn of phrase."[50] His decision was ostensibly about protecting the feelings and careers of hard-working German actors, but in reality it was about protecting the Propaganda Ministry.

In November 1936, Goebbels went a step further and banned all art criticism completely, confining critics to writing descriptive reviews. Goebbels's directive called criticism the expression of "Jewish infiltration into art" and "individualistic arbitrariness."[51] He claimed that, unlike their Jewish counterparts, truly great German art critics merely wanted to "serve art," not pass judgment. All critics would need a special license from the Theatre Chamber, allowing Goebbels to exercise control and prevent those who in the past had been overly critical from publishing their opinions.[52]

In 1936, journalist Felix Zimmerman observed:

> the un-German, sensationalist plays catering to the basest instincts have disappeared together with the Marxist-oriented problem plays and the agitational reportages. In addition to the tribute to the classics and the good old German entertainment play, their place has been taken by the new historical drama, the völkisch drama of the day, the creations of the new poetic generation.[53]

---

[50] Quoted in David Welch, "Nazi Film Policy: Control, Ideology, and Propaganda," in *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, 98.

[51] Drewniak, 85.

[52] Despite these measures, some criticism did work its way into the descriptions. Some critics developed codes to hide the criticism, while others, like Wolf Braumüller, a committed Nazi in the Rosenberg camp, continued to attack individual directorial styles that he believed were unfaithful to Nazi ideology.

[53] Felix Zimmerman, "Gereinigt, erneuert und erweitert (Cleansed, Renewed, and

According to Zimmerman, in three years, the leftist theatre had been replaced by a truer representation of the *Volk*. But after the shift from the gathering phase to consolidation, the guidelines for what was acceptable within a theatre's repertoire had shifted as well. Attempts to portray the turmoil of the post-war or Weimar period were declared failures by the Theatre Section of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and were prohibited. The censors' argument was basically "Why remind us…that in the years of turmoil Germans had fought one another?…In terms of propaganda nothing could be gained from it," as the German population stood united behind their *Führer*. Even plays about World War I only rarely passed the censor—they did nothing to conceal the horrible losses Germany had suffered, and as the Nazis were preparing to mobilize for a new war, they did not want any images of war and suffering staged before the population.[54]

One example of a tremendously popular and promoted play that was suddenly deemed undesirable was *Schlageter*, by Hanns Johst. The play was first performed in April 1933, for Hitler's birthday. It dramatized the story of Albert Leo Schlageter (1894-1923). Schlageter—hailed in Johst's play as "the first soldier of the Third Reich"—was a demobilized army officer who joined the Nazi Party in 1922 and the following year took part in armed resistance against the French forces still occupying the industrial Ruhr region. He was caught sabotaging a railway line, was tried by a

---

Extended)," in *Theater und Film im Dritten Reich; Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Josph Wulf (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn, 1964), 34-5.

[54] Panse, 146.

French military court, and executed.[55] After 1935, according to the new criteria mentioned above, this play was no longer politically acceptable.

Another victim of this change in suitability was the new form of Nazi drama, the *Thingspiel*. After 1936, the form was banned because some of the very aspects of the dramaturgy that were used to identify with the audience, such as the mass choir, the representative characters, were too close to the dramaturgy of those decadent art forms, Expressionism and epic theatre. Richard Euringer's *Deutsche Passion 1933*, perhaps the most famous *Thingspiel*, which won the state prize in 1934, was officially dropped because of its portrayal of suffering due to World War I. The play was accused of having "pacifist tendencies."[56] By the end of 1937 Goebbels had prohibited positive or negative references to the state, politics, religion and the army. The Nazi salute was forbidden on stage. These prohibitions were to ensure that the Nazi regime could not be questioned or attacked, and they attempted to decrease the likelihood that any direct inferences could be made by an audience.

Vicki Patraka argues that in this new phase the clichés of the fatherland, blood, and soil had become "unfashionable." Whereas Steinweis looks at this period of the Nazi regime and sees a turn towards radicalization, Patraka sees a move towards a conservative entrenchment. Steinweis's evaluation is correct in many ways. The centralization of power, the banning of criticism, and the increased purges of Jews all point to a radicalization of ideology and politics. But in terms of how that

---

[55] Hanns Johst, *Schlageter: Schauspiel* (Munich: Albert Langen/Georg Müller, 1933), 27. This play contains the famous line, often erroneously attributed to Hermann Göring, "Whenever I hear the word culture, I release the safety catch of my Browning!"

[56] Drewniak, 81.

ideology, and the *Volk* itself was presented on stage, I believe that Patraka's assessment is more useful. The radical, overt Nazi ideology that was present in some of these early dramas was exchanged for a safer, more banal aesthetic. Patraka goes on to say, "Purging these elements made Nazi theatre move closer to the earlier bourgeois forms it deplored except that even the topicality realism employs was not allowed."[57] The reality of German life could not be staged, so one *völkisch* fantasy was simply replaced with another. Nazi ideological dramas disappeared from repertoires, which now almost exclusively featured the classics and comedies.

The move towards comedy and the classics only intensified as preparations for war accelerated. In 1938, as conscriptions started, Hitler remarked in private, "the performances must be 'illusion' to the masses. The little man knows all too well life's seriousness. Because life is serious, enjoyment therefore must be pleasant."[58] After the war started, that enjoyment had to get more and more pleasant. The beginning of the war, like every other major change in Nazi policy, had a direct effect on the theatre and what kind of plays appeared on the stage.

In a decree dated September 1, 1939, Goebbels announced that the theatre programs already approved by the Dramaturg of the Reich could proceed. Theatres were told to mix dramas and comedies, noting that both soldiers and civilians "appreciated a good mix of serious and light cultural offerings." The prewar practice of allowing theatres to choose their own productions continued, avoiding "potentially counterproductive censorship and …striking a balance between art's political and

---

[57] Vivian Patraka, from an unnamed paper/discussion presented at ATHE 2001 in response to my work.

[58] Quoted in Drewniak, 83.

entertainment functions."[59] The goal now was to entertain and distract, and messy cases of censorship that would play out in the public eye and perhaps indicate that all was not well within the Reich were to be avoided. Of course, Goebbels could make this type of statement secure in the knowledge that no theatre had attempted to produce an official objectionable production in the last six years.

In a letter dated November 19, 1939 Goebbels wrote:

> Any censorship by authorities jeopardizes the free development of cultural life. It also contradicts the concept of the Reich Culture Chamber, which wants to lead the people producing culture but not to exercise petty scrutiny of their works.[60]

But despite Goebbels's stated opposition to censorship, interference by the Ministry and the Chamber of Culture intensified and the bans increased. Plays from enemy countries could no longer be produced. The major exception to this decree was the performance of Shakespeare. Although Shakespeare was initially banned after the start of the War, Hitler himself intervened. He argued that Shakespeare in German translation was a German classic, and Shakespeare continued to be performed. However, most historical dramas and some tragedies were dropped from theatre programs, while performances of Shakespearean comedies increased, and for the first time in the Third Reich, the total number of Shakespearean productions decreased.

The war also affected the theatres in a very practical way. As the Allies began bombing Germany, many theatres included in their playbills instructions for what to do if an air raid siren should sound during the performance. Ultimately, the war resulted in the closure of the theatres. On August 20, 1944, Goebbels decreed that

---

[59] Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 163.

[60] Quoted in Drewniak, 93.

"all theatres, music halls, cabarets, and drama schools are to close as of 1 September."[61] Theatres were simply not safe after months of bombings, and this also created a new infusion of workers for the war economy and more draft eligible men.

Throughout the Third Reich, Intendants and theatre directors found themselves walking a very unsteady line. Although some repertoire decisions were obvious—plays with positive references to Jews or communists were always banned—these were surprisingly murky waters to navigate. Plays that were completely acceptable one week were banned the next. Moreover, a politically acceptable and artistically challenging way to stage Nazi ideology was never proposed by the cultural organizations. External forces, such as political rivalry and in-fighting among the Nazi elite, often superseded the adherence to Nazi ideology. People found that their colleagues disappeared from one day to the next. And every director had to decide how political or "apolitical" their productions would be. How did these theatres—the Theater des Volkes, the Deutsches Theater, and the Berliner Staatstheater—with such close connections to the Nazi regime express Nazi ideology within the shifting framework of Nazi cultural policy? In the following chapters, I will examine how these theatres dealt with these challenges by investigating the productions they staged.

[61] Ibid., 89.

Chapter Two: Theater des Volkes

When the Nazis took possession of the Großes Schauspielhaus in 1933, they acquired a theatre with a long and varied history, a theatre that was known primarily for its unique and grandiose architecture. The building was originally a market near the Spree River; in the latter part of the nineteenth century it was converted into a circus, drawing crowds to see feats of horsemanship and other circus acts. It was also used as a meeting hall for events and conferences due to its cavernous size.

According to Yvonne Shafer, the first use of the building as a theatre occurred in November 1919, with a production of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, directed by Max Reinhardt and starring such famous actors as Agnes Straub and Werner Krauss.[1] John Willett describes the building as Reinhardt's "new would-be German National Theatre."[2] He conceived of a "great theatre without loges and balconies, the stage sticking out into the auditorium. No court theatre, no peep-hole theatre, rather a theatre for the masses."[3] Reinhardt hired the architect Hans Poelzig to convert the circus arena into a theatre where the three thousand spectators would sit together as a democratic body with no conscious class separation. Reinhardt wanted the audience to feel as if they were a participant in the play, not just an observer. He also wanted to integrate the stage and the auditorium, with the auditorium decorated in "harmony"

---

[1] Yvonne Shafer, "Nazi Berlin and the Grosses Schauspielhaus," in *Theatre in the Third Reich, The Prewar Years: Essays on Theatre in Nazi Germany*, ed. Glen W. Gadberry , 103. For a more detailed description of the production, see John Willett, *Theatre of the Weimar Republic*, 64.

[2] John Willett, *The Theatre of the Weimar Republic* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 63.

[3] Quoted in Shafer, 104.

with the stage and the actors moving freely between the two.[4]

The theatre was equipped with a skydome, a revolving stage, and a large forestage to bring the actors closer to the audience. But Poelzig was faced with a number of challenges due to the building's cavernous interior. There were iron supports throughout the building that could not be moved, and the huge dome over the stage made the space an acoustical challenge. Poelzig's solution to the problems later became the theatre's trademark—he decorated the eight sided dome and iron supports with hanging stalactite-like structures, which gave the room excellent acoustics. They also provided a source for indirect lighting and gave the theatre its nickname, the *Tropfensteinhöhle* (stalactite cave).[5]

The theatre had also played a prominent role in two central events for the Communist party and its supporters. When reports of Lenin's death arrived in January 1924, thousands of workers gathered at the Großes Schauspielhaus, with a chorus of male workers and an agit-prop group taking the stage. In 1925, Erwin Piscator's production of Ernst Toller and Erich Weinert's *Trotz alledem!* ran for ten days at the theatre.

But with a few exceptions, Reinhardt's dream of a democratic, popular German theatre never quite materialized. John Willett writes that the theatre became mired down in "archaism, aestheticism, and commercial calculation."[6] Musical comedy and operetta became the main attraction of the theatre, and Reinhardt sold the

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Willett, 150.

premises in 1931 due to financial difficulties.

It is not a surprise that the Nazis were so captivated by this massive structure. In his book *Zwischen Zucht und Ekstase; zur Theatralik von NS-Architectur,* Dieter Bartetzko writes that the massive Großes Schauspielhaus was in many ways a forestudy for the typical architecture of the Third Reich, a space where the massive architecture could be used for mass control of the audience through visual elements such as lighting and sound.[7] Reinhardt imagined that the physical surroundings would engage the spectator as an active participant in the drama unfolding on the stage. It is this very feature that made the building so attractive to the Nazis, who envisioned a use for the Großes Schauspielhaus that was in many ways identical to Reinhardt's (although they would never dare to admit it). Reinhardt's description of a massive popular audience losing themselves in the magic of a national German theatre foreshadows Nazi descriptions of how the *Volk* could be unified and mobilized through the theatre. As Shafer points out, the following description of *Trotz alledem!* could be easily mistaken for a description of a Nazi party rally:

> The masses began to participate. The theatre was reality for them, and soon it no longer was stage against auditorium, rather a single great auditorium, a *single* battleground, a *single* great demonstration. This unification on this definitive evening was the evidence of the power of agitation of political theatre.[8]

This description closely echoes what the Nazis hoped to achieve with the theatre, an expression and unification of the *Volk*. The Großes Schauspielhaus, with its large auditorium that could seat thousands of spectators, seemed to be a perfect stage for

---

[7] Dieter Bartetzko, *Zwischen Zucht und Ekstase; zur Theatralik von NS-Architectur* (Berlin: Mann Verlag, 1985), 80.

[8] Shafer, 105.

this goal. The relationship between the Theater des Volkes and the Nazi organization *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy) made the theatre a strong propaganda tool for the regime. But in reality this was easier said than done. While initial productions were more overt in their attempt to stage the classics through an ideological lens, as the gathering phase of Nazism gave way to the consolidation phase, the propagandistic message was muted. When the war began, the change became even more evident. Escapist operetta became the acceptable way to portray Germany and its people. The theatre's mission had not changed—the goal was still to educate and uplift the *Volk.* It was the manner in which this goal was fulfilled that evolved. The operettas replaced the heroic, epic nature of the classical drama most often staged at the Theater des Volkes with a folk-tale, nostalgic image of Germany. Reminding the audience of an idealized vision of Germany, one that the *Führer* was fighting for, was seen as the most effective propaganda.

The Großes Schauspielhaus reopened in January 1934, a year after the seizure of power, under the new name Theater des Volkes. It was under the direct control of Goebbels and the Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, and was one of only three theatres in Berlin to receive funding from the Ministry. The newly named theatre was to be an organ of the Strength through Joy movement.

Strength through Joy was created on November 27,1933, as an organization within the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German Labor Front), the huge official labor union founded by the Nazis in May 1933. Strength through Joy was headed by Dr. Robert Ley, and the organization's purpose was to organize and subsidize the leisure of

German workers.[9] Strength through Joy was seen as an "educational-propaganda structure to turn Germans into believing National Socialists,"[10] especially the most "recalcitrant class, the workers."[11] Ley proclaimed that no one in Germany was to have a private life in Germany except for in their sleep, and in a speech to the International Leisure Congress in 1936 he said that "we must gradually come to the realization that we must organize leisure anew."[12] Everything in Nazi Germany had become a forum for propaganda and the Nazis wanted to control all aspects of life, both the public and private spheres.

Ley saw the organization of all free time as "perhaps the greatest thing that this revolution produces."[13] He believed that making the optimum use of leisure time would increase the productivity of the German worker by preparing him for higher performance: "since time on the job demands high and peak performance from the worker, one must offer the best of the best in his free time to nourish soul, spirit and body." He also felt that offering subsidized leisure activities which had previously only been available to the middle and upper classes (such as theatre or concert tickets and vacations) would further the integration of the German worker into society and improve his self image.[14] It would also give the Nazis a forum for gaining the support

---

[9] The idea of a state-run leisure organization was not a new one. Ley was influenced by the Belgian leisure theorist Henri de Man, but Strength through Joy was mostly fashioned after the Italian Fascist *Dopolavoro* (After-Work Organization).

[10] Ronald Smelser, *Robert Ley: Hitler's Labor Front Leader* (New York: Berg Publishers Ltd., 1988), 106-7.

[11] Ibid., 201.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ley, quoted in ibid., 210.

[14] Ibid.

of those who were traditionally perceived to be supportive of the communist movement.

There was another very politically astute motive behind this kind of organized leisure time. If people were busy they could not become bored, and boredom could lead to:

> stupid, heretical, yes, in the end criminal ideas and trains of thought. Gloomy dullness makes people complain; gives them a feeling of homelessness; in a word, the feeling of absolute superfluity. Nothing is more dangerous to the state than that.[15]

Keeping people busy was a way of keeping them satisfied, a way of maintaining order and control. And, if it made people feel grateful to the state for providing them with such wonderful leisure opportunities, that was even better.

But the Strength through Joy movement added more fuel to the fire in the feud between Joseph Goebbels and Alfred Rosenberg. Rosenberg was the head of another organization that sought to organize German culture, the *Nationalsozialistische Kulturgemeinde* (National Socialist Culture Community), which was essentially a reorganization of the now-defunct Combat League for German Culture. He had coordinated the largest two theatregoer's organizations (which essentially served as a means for mass theatre subscriptions at substantial discounts, much like Strength through Joy*),* the *Verband der freien Volksbühne* and the *Bühnenvolksbund,* under the auspices of the National Socialist Culture Community and later merged them into a newly formed organization called the *Deutsche Bühne.*

In 1934, Rosenberg and Ley agreed that the *Deutsche Bühne* would become a "corporative member" of Strength through Joy, but this alliance soon fell prey to

[15] Ley, quoted in ibid., 210-211.

squabbling between the two men.[16] Rosenberg sought a new arrangement with Goebbels and the Chamber of Culture, but Goebbels did not have a good relationship with Rosenberg, as described in the previous chapter. He had no interest in forming an alliance with Rosenberg. Goebbels did, however, see the advantages of a relationship between the Chamber of Culture and Ley's Strength through Joy. The arrangement made sense for both organizations, as Alan Steinweis describes: "the *Kulturkammer* constituted a cartel of culture producers, whereas the *Kraft durch Freude* had already established itself as, in effect, Germany's largest cultural consumer cooperative." Programs sponsored by Strength through Joy would ensure work for Chamber of Culture members, while Ley could secure a guaranteed reduced-fee participation of Chamber of Culture members in Strength through Joy entertainment functions. In November 1936, much to Rosenberg's dismay, the Chamber of Culture and Strength through Joy sealed their alliance and held a joint annual meeting.[17]

And the alliance proved a successful one for both organizations. In 1936, for example, theater events organized by Strength through Joy attracted a combined audience of 300,000 per month in Berlin alone.[18] In 1938, 8.1 million Germans went to Strength through Joy theatre performances and concerts.[19] The contribution of the Strength through Joy organization to the stimulation of the theatre economy reflected

---

[16] Alan E. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 70.

[17] Ibid., 70-1.

[18] Ibid., 75.

[19] Smelser, 216.

a broader effort by Theatre Chamber officials to develop a loyal audience. These officials were convinced that the *Volk*, disgusted by the theatre of the Weimar Republic, had simply stopped going. Anecdotal evidence supports this belief; one theatre critic counted only seven paying customers in the audience at one of Jeßner's final performances at the Berliner Staatstheater.[20] In order to increase their success, Party officials believed that it was urgent from a financial standpoint to make theatre attendance affordable and enjoyable to all.

But this arrangement possessed symbolic as well as economic value:

> During the Weimar era, Nazi cultural propaganda had bemoaned the alienation of the German masses from a German artistic establishment enamored of modernism and experimentation. A *Kulturkammer-Kraft durch Freude* alliance would represent a return of art to the people. It would reflect a new 'unity between artist and people,' embodying the 'living connection of our new artistic life with the broadest layers of our awakening *Volk*.'[21]

The Theater des Volkes, whose architecture was viewed by both the Nazis and Max Reinhardt as a means of erasing the division between actor and audience member, was especially well suited to this new unity between the artist and the people. It was the first theatre to be designated as a Strength through Joy theatre, and its mission was to provide productions that would "move the individuals in the audience to a sense of greatness and unity through the presentation of classics and performances reminding them of the traditions of German literature."[22] Nazi Party officials felt that the Theater des Volkes would be a site to stage Nazi ideology and mythology for the masses (in a literal sense, given the size of the auditorium).

---

[20] Gerwin Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage. German Theatre and Society, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 29.

[21] Smelser, 71.

[22] Shafer, 115.

The opening production of the Theater des Volkes embodied this mission: Schiller's *Die Räuber*, which premiered on January 18th, 1934. Thousands of workers received free admission, programs, and coat checks—although the class-free seating arrangement dreamed of by Reinhardt was marred by the addition of loges Goebbels had built for himself, Hitler, and other notables, including Robert Ley and Rudolf Hess.

The Nazis had a particular affection for Schiller. Goebbels, speaking of Schiller, said:

> If Schiller had lived in these times, without doubt he would have become the great poetic champion of our revolution. He had the character it takes to devote himself to it with all his might. And he possessed the artistic genius one needs to give it creative form…[23]

In fact, Schiller would eventually become the most-performed dramatist of the Third Reich. One Nazi critic reveled that the "cancer" that had debilitated Schiller, from the liberals to the Communists, was gone and that National Socialism alone "can provide the ideological foundation necessary for a proper evaluation of Schiller's achievement."[24]

But, like many dramatists performed within the Nazi regime, his standing was neither secure nor fixed. Georg Ruppelt, in his work on the topic, explores how Schiller was on the one hand exploited by the Nazis, while on the other hand Nazi critics expressed concern about what Lesley Sharpe described as his "humanitarian

---

[23] "Die Schiller-Gedenkrede des Reichsministers Dr. Goebbels," *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), November 13, 1934: 6.

[24] Lesley Sharpe, "National Socialism and Schiller," in *German Life and Letters*, 36 (1982-83): 156.

ideals and the obvious cosmopolitanism which he shared with Goethe."[25] Schiller's supporters within the regime dealt with these concerns by simply ignoring or downplaying any aspect of Schiller's work or history that did not agree with the image they wished to propagate.

Certain aspects of Schiller's work were emphasized to serve the Party. His place in Hitler's heart had been widely mythologized—Hitler had seen *Wilhelm Tell* when he was twelve years old and had been incredibly moved by it; in fact, it was the first play studied by fourteen and fifteen year old children in the Nazi school curriculum. A year before the seizure of power, the party published a book by Hans Fabricius entitled *Schiller as Hitler's Comrade in Arms,* which sought to illustrate the National Socialism in his plays. Fabricius viewed him as a prophet and a guide, analyzing the relevant political concepts of each play (for example, "soldiership and politics" in *Wallenstein*).[26] The book was republished for the great "Schiller-*Feier*" (Schiller Celebration) of 1934, which honored the 175th anniversary of the playwright's birth. The "Schiller-*Feier*" proved very useful to the Nazis. It provided an excuse for large processions and demonstrations, and, according to Sharpe, the amount of attention paid to Schiller gave the Nazis ammunition to counteract "at home and abroad" their "brutal and anti-intellectual image."[27] The Nazis viewed the theatre as a crucial component to the rehabilitation of this image. In the early years of the regime, the Nazis were extremely intent on convincing social and political

---

[25] Ibid.

[26] John London, "Introduction," in *Theatre Under the Nazis*, ed. John London (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 27.

[27] Sharpe, 158.

conservatives who were not Party members to embrace National Socialism. The Nazi ideologues felt that the theatre, which had betrayed conservative Berliners during the Weimar Republic, would prove to these Germans that National Socialism was not dangerous or violent, but rather a return to the glorious German culture of old.

The Nazis emphasized the earlier plays of Schiller's career, such as *Die Räuber, Fiesco,* and *Kabale und Liebe*,[28] tying them to *Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism, a period Nazi critics found eminently more *völkisch* and desirable than Weimar Classicism. In a 1933 production of *Die Räuber* in Frankfurt, heroic emphasis was placed on the band of outlaws, positioning them as *völkisch* heroes, stressing the group over the individual, in keeping with Nazi ideology of community over individual. During the war, productions of *Maria Stuart* and *Jungfrau von Orleans* were also used as anti-English propaganda.

Don Carlos was far more challenging. But, as was typical of the Nazis, problematic works were simply suppressed to allow the image of Schiller as *Nationaldichter* (national poet) to remain untarnished, at least in the eyes of the public and for propaganda purposes. Even Hitler's beloved *Wilhelm Tell,* the most performed Schiller play in 1933-34, 1934-35, and 1938-39,[29] was banned in 1941 by Hitler himself, not just from performance, but from schools as well. Perhaps he feared the legitimization of murdering a tyrant.

The inaugural production of the Theater des Volkes was carefully calculated. It was part of the Schiller-*Feier,* and Goebbels himself was very involved in the

[28] *Kabale und Liebe* was the most performed play of Schiller's during the Third Reich, with a total of 213 performances. London, "Introduction," 27.

[29] Ibid.

process. He attended rehearsals, and according to one review often gave advice to the director, Walther Brügmann. As several critics noted in their reviews, the evening was a great success for both the company and for Goebbels himself. The reviews and audience response were overwhelmingly positive. Heinz von Lichberg, in the Party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*, takes special care to mention the damage done to the play and the theatre building itself in previous years. He writes that the theatre itself, which had been "taken away from its given purpose as a *Volkstheater* and filled with hollow, deceptive glitter-business through a crafty theatre entrepreneur," had been returned to authenticity and beauty. Schiller, who had "been turned from a servant of art into an 'interpretation,' which had nothing in common with Schiller—it was only common," had his noble spirit restored with this performance.[30] Lichberg's review stresses how the Nazis would be the ones to save the theatre and through it enrich the lives of the *Volk*.

Lichberg, like many other critics, mentions the giant size of the theatre. The scenic design by Benno von Arent was widely praised. The Bohemian Forest was described as "a fantastic view, with trees in the foreground and peaks of trees in the background,"[31] a setting which mirrored the dark and rough human masses of the robbers themselves.[32] The scene by the Danube was enhanced by shafts of sunlight—

[30] Heinz von Lichberg, "Die Räuber" im Großen Schauspielhaus," *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), n.p. The "glitter business" to which Lichberg refers is a direct attack on the glitzy operettas staged at the theatre during the end of the Weimar Republic, and "the crafty theatre entrepreneur" is probably an attack on the Jewish Reinhardt, although he had very little to do with the day to day management of the theatre once operettas became the main fare. This comment is quite (unintentionally) ironic, as the theatre would once again become home to operettas after 1936.

[31] Shafer, 109.

[32] Lichberg.

in fact, the lighting seems to have been particularly spectacular, as several mentions are made of it in Lichberg's review, as well as others. Arent's scenery provided a "deeply moving and helpful" backdrop for the dramatic events.[33]

The acting was also praised. The crowd scenes were very relaxed and natural—Lichberg mentions the great teamwork, especially of the robbers. Heinrich George, in the role of the evil Franz Moor, seems to have been quite effective. He is bookish, digging in the library in his books—a nod to Nazi anti-intellectualism and an action which seems to put him in opposition to the book-burning Nazis. The "venom of his soul drips from his fat, distorted mouth," and he takes care to hide his "true, hideous character behind a calm mask." When he faces his downfall, George whimpers, running through the space, dripping with sweat. Lichberg writes, "This Franz Moor is a bogeyman, is the superlative of all mean-ness."[34] The description of George's Franz echoes typical anti-Jewish propaganda. While I am not implying that Franz is a Jew in this production, he seems to take on the obvious dangerous qualities believed to be possessed by the Jews. These traits were synonymous with evil in Nazi Germany, and when Lichberg assigns them to Franz, he quickly and unequivocally marks Franz as a true danger to the *Volk*.

Paul Wagner's Karl Moor, on the other hand, is pure good. Even when he comes off as "assertive," he is always "well-behaved, decent, proper" internally. His association with the robbers is barely even mentioned in Lichberg's review. The beautiful Amalie, Karl's beloved who is coveted by Franz, played by Hilde Körber,

---

[33] Lichberg.

[34] Ibid.

"stands out as a white dream, a beautiful untouched picture between the brothers, total sorrow and longing, completely inaccessible to the malicious, grubby Franz."[35] Special mention is paid to her untouched, virginal qualities in Lichberg's review, and he takes care to mention that she is hardly ever an active participant, except for one moment when she boxes Franz's ears. She is the ideal Nazi woman: beautiful, pure, an object of desire who only attacks to preserve her virtue from the evil Franz.

Shafer writes that the performance achieved the desired effect: "the audience fell directly under the spell of the presentation and individuals united to become a connected mass."[36] One critic said the workers became a community with the same ideas and goals, a result brought about because "the actors were capable of drawing the audience in to feel it had experienced all that the characters had experienced in the play."[37] The actors made use of side stages for monologues and made direct contact with the audience.[38] Lichberg writes that the audience was inspired over and over again to tremendous applause, applause which another critic noted "paralleled the size of the enormous theatre."[39]

The reviews paint a picture of a production which used the technical effects made possible by the theatre's technology, the size of the theatre, the talent of the actors, and the text itself to great effect, creating a production truly worthy of the inauguration of the theatre for the *Volk*. They also describe a production firmly

---

[35] Ibid.

[36] Shafer, 109.

[37] H.P., quoted in ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Lichberg.

rooted in National Socialist ideology.

In September 1934, Brügmann directed another classic, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The developing trend of performing classic plays stayed true to the theatre's stated mission and reflected Goebbels's recommendation that German theatres produce the classics until the "steely romantic" drama of Nazi Germany took on satisfactory shape. According to Werner Habricht, another motive for pushing the classics was the belief that the familiar repertoire would pacify the cultured middle class.[40]

Not only was Shakespeare the second-most performed playwright during the Third Reich (right behind Schiller)—approximately three percent of all productions in the Third Reich were of his plays—he was ultimately appropriated by the Nazis as having Germanic or Nordic identity. As in the case of Schiller, there were some Nazi critics and dramatists who did not want Shakespeare to hold such a prominent place in the new canon of acceptable works. Contemporary dramatist Eberhard Wolfgang Möller thought that Shakespeare had led German drama astray, that he was "typically unGerman and thus had only made life a misery for German dramatists" when taken as a model.[41]

But these few critical voices were overwhelmed by the chorus of voices lauding Shakespeare as a true Nordic spirit. Thilo von Trotha, author and secretary to Alfred Rosenberg, called Shakespeare "the great creator of Nordic character drama

---

[40] Werner Habicht, "Shakespeare and Theatre Politics in the Third Reich," in *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, ed. Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 111.

[41] John London, "Non-German Drama in the Third Reich," in *Theatre Under the Nazis*, 239.

…one of the greatest liberators of the Germanic spirit."[42] Nazi critics recapitulated the "glorious history" of Shakespeare in Germany, with author Werner Deubel writing:

> It is no coincidence that Germans—and Germans alone!—were the first to discover, translate, perform, and so keenly appropriate Shakespeare that the great tragedian, who 'teaches, nourishes and educates Nordic people'(Herder), since then seems, in a deeper sense, to belong more to the Germans than the English.[43]

It was noted by critics that Shakespeare had been lucky enough to write in an England free of Jews, and Goebbels mentioned that Shakespeare lived "in London at the beginning of a world empire" and was "right at the formation of history,"[44] an attempt to draw a direct connection between Shakespeare and Nazi Germany.

Some critics went even farther to make Shakespeare German, and more importantly *völkisch*, in spirit if not by birth. Amateur mythographers wrote that his fairy worlds and the myths behind the tragedies were Nordic in origin. An aristocratic journal commented on the Nordic nobility of his kings, while yet another journal commended the closeness to the soil of his rural origin, a direct allusion to the popular blood and soil ideology, which saw a strong link between the *Volk* and German land. One professor noted that the "Nordic" instincts of the women in Shakespeare's plays to choose valuable husbands was a lesson "for the breeding of a healthy generation," while another dramatic theorist noted that Shakespeare was a supreme example of political drama, since private experiences and values are

---

[42] Quoted in ibid., 240.

[43] Quoted in ibid.

[44] Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: sämtliche Fragmente*, Teil I: *Aufzeichnungen 1924-1941*, 4 vols, ed. by Elke Fröhlich (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1987), III, 424.

subordinate to the needs of public ones—just as the needs of the average German were subordinate to the needs and values of the *Volk*.[45]

In light of the Nazis' appropriation of Shakespeare as a *völkisch* playwright, the decision to stage *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was in line with the Theater des Volkes's mission to inspire the audience with the best of German literature. As in the production of *Die Räuber,* the production made extensive use of technical effects and costume. Harald Paulsen, in *Völkischer Beobachter*, wrote that the rich colors of the costumes and lighting effects lent an "absolutely exhilarating beauty."[46] The revolving stage was used, so when Hermia made her flight, "the stage turned 360 degrees, whereby continuously new surprising prospects appeared: bats, frogs, and strange trees gave a sense of a refined fairy-tale type of decoration."[47] In fact, Paulsen commented that the sets and costumes of the different scenarios were too predominant in the production, although it was still "a remarkably good performance." By focusing on the spectacle, Brügmann and designer Benno von Arent hoped to make the play accessible to workers who may not have been familiar with Shakespeare.

The size of the stage was noted. Paulsen remarked that the dimensions of the "giant theatre" reinforced the impression of the impish fairy world. In this production, as in *Die Räuber*, Brügmann "played with the whole room," making use of pathways into the auditorium—one on the left for the Athenians, another on the

---

[45] Habicht, 112-14.

[46] Harald Paulsen, "Sommernachtstraum im Theater des Volkes," *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), September 18, 1934: 5.

[47] Quoted in Shafer, 110.

right for the mechanicals. The reviews of the acting were more mixed. Paulsen noted that Paul Wagner and Hanna Ralph as Theseus and Hyppolita were very pleasing as the heroic pair, Otto Collin and Herbert Dirmoser as Lysander and Demetrius were humorous and convincing as lovers behaving badly, and Helene Dietrich as Helena was pleasant in both appearance and performance. Paulsen was not as generous towards the actress playing Hermia (Inga Ewald). He found her performance forced, which caused the audience to miss the lighter, humorous touches in the role. He also disagreed with the characterization of Egeus, who was played by Paul Rehkopf as a "helpless, nagging and drooling old man," rather than a dignified advisor and furious father, and he calls Brügmann to task for allowing such a distortion. Rehkopf's interpretation of Egeus contradicted the accepted National Socialist view description of a father, who was to be the strong head of a family, just as Hitler was the strong head of the country. Nor was he impressed with the performance of Puck. But he did give the performance an overall favorable review, noting that the public gave "rich applause" at the end of the play.[48] One reviewer agreed, suggesting that the "director and designer had succeeded in enchanting the audience so that their eyes were as dazzled and mystified as those of the characters in the play."[49] Another concluded that this was just the beginning of a long run of "lively, beautiful evenings."[50] That success seems to have been largely credited to the comedic performances and the amazing scenic design.

---

[48] Paulsen.

[49] Herbert Pfeiffer, "Eine Sommernachtstraum-Revue," *12-Uhr-Blatt* (Berlin), Sept. 17, 1934: n.p.

[50] Quoted in Shafer, 110.

It is clear from the reviews that critics were willing to question the production, despite the Theater des Volkes's explicit ties to the regime. The majority of these critical rumblings focused on the "revue-like" nature of the production. Herbert Pfeiffer, referring to the actors costumed as mushrooms and other plants moving about and dancing fairies and elves, dubbed the production "Shakespeare as revue."[51] Another review made special mention of the theatre's need to win over "the common people [*Volksgenossen*—the ideologically faithful] who previously had little connection with the institution of the theatre."[52] Anton Dietzenschmidt noted that the prominent phrase *Volksgenossen, Dein Theater* (Comrades, your theatre), was featured on the program, further emphasizing the Theater des Volkes connection to the ordinary man.[53] The implication was that by trying to appeal to the mass audience—the workers receiving subsidized tickets through Strength through Joy—the theatre was in danger of becoming too kitchy. One critic was not so subtle, attacking the production as a "blasphemy to Shakespeare" for its use of revue interludes so popular in the Weimar Republic, calling it "Marxist."[54]

One expected change was the absence of the incidental music traditional for the play since the nineteenth century, by Felix Mendelsohn, who was a Jew. New music by Edmund Nick replaced Mendelsohn's, but it was not well received. Fritz Stege, writing in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, complained that Nick had not captured

---

[51] Pfeiffer.

[52] Quoted in Shafer, 110.

[53] Quoted in ibid..

[54] London, "Non-German Drama in the Third Reich," 243. A later production of *Taming of the Shrew*, also directed by Walther Brügmann, was also criticized for its revue content and clowning.

the "magic of the forest," and that he could have learned from Mendelsohn how to avoid a trivial salon style (although Stege in no way suggested that the music should be reintroduced).[55] That the Nazi Party newspaper would mention Mendelsohn in any sort of a positive light seems shocking given his racial status. But in this case, artistic merit took precedence over Nazi ideology, at least at this early stage in the regime.

These criticisms, or attacks as the case may be, illustrate the unique challenge faced by the Theater des Volkes: to perform classic plays in a way that was accessible to the main audience, who in this case were working class, "average" citizens not used to attending the theatre. The very aspect of Strength through Joy's mission—to make culture available to those not accustomed to it, thereby making them feel integrated into a new Nazi society—in this case seemed to lead Brügmann and his company to "dumb down" the culture being offered. Was this pandering to a lower common denominator a betrayal of Nazi ideals, taking away the "heroic" and "non-sentimental" qualities espoused by Goebbels? Or was the objective of making culture available to all Germans the more urgent agenda? This split over what German drama should look like would continue to characterize the repertoire selection at the Theater des Volkes. Some productions were staged in a more serious, "high art" manner, while others, like the Shakespearean comedies, were presented in the "revue style." Both fulfilled distinct parts of the Nazi vision for the Theater des Volkes—heroic tales of Germany and the *Volk* on the one hand and accessible versions of classics intended to show the worker that he too was entitled to culture and art in the new Reich on the other.

---

[55] Fritz Stege, "Die Bühnenmusik," *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), September 18, 1934: 5.

The year 1934 ended as it had begun at the Theater des Volkes—with another tribute to Schiller to round out the Schiller-*Feier*. A production of his *Wallenstein* trilogy premiered on November 10, 1934, Schiller's birthday.

Wallenstein presented a conundrum to Nazi ideology—after all, Wallenstein is trying to make peace against the orders of his "*Führer*." The critic for the *Völkischer Beobachter* took great pains in his review to cement *Wallenstein* as an acceptable play and place it within a Nazi ideology. He compared it to *The Oresteia*, *The Divine Comedy*, or *Faust* in its uniqueness, power, and ability to capture its time in a mirror, becoming a rallying cry for a "racial and emotional outlook."[56] How does he reconcile *Wallenstein* with a Nazi worldview? Wallenstein's hubris is that he failed "because of the inability to submit himself to the uppermost German moral law, the service to the community." This critic goes on to say that Schiller was seized with a fanatical need to serve the *Volk*, and that Schiller does not hesitate to blame Wallenstein for his acts. But, on the other hand, Schiller relieves some of the blame by showing that Wallenstein recognizes his great mistake of assaulting "the community, the German people," although self-realization does not absolve him of his guilt—only death can do that. But despite his weaknesses, the critic writes, Schiller has drawn Wallenstein as a "Nordic character, who drove a conflict between personal pride and faithful followers" and who resolved that conflict only with his death.[57] A play by Schiller, Germany's greatest poet, that (in this Nazi interpretation) stressed the importance of community over personal need, was an ideologically sound

[56] "Die Wallenstein-Trilogie: Schiller-Ehrung im Theater des Volkes," *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), November 13, 1934: 5.

[57] Ibid.

choice for the Theater des Volkes.

The performance began at 3:00 in the afternoon, with a one hour dinner pause. It ran until 10:30 in the evening.[58] This production was directed by Dr. Richard Weichert, who was known for his production of Hasenclever's *Der Sohn* in 1918. But his earlier Expressionist forays were ignored by most, and Weichert was generally praised by critics for the production, with one notable exception.

Weichert was praised for carrying out such a large scale production. The stage was filled with soldiers and peasants in seventeenth-century costume. In order to take in the production, the spectator would have to turn his head 70 degrees, as side stages were utilized. In one scene, Heinrich George as Wallenstein stood on a side stage watching the revolving stage turn from a hall to a landscape of "ruins with broken columns and a wonderful, mysterious darkened sky."[59] Eduard Sturm, the designer, created a simple setting with steps, columns and a "sky filled with stars," a set which would seem to have more in common with the reviled Leopold Jeßner than the dancing mushrooms of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[60] Heinrich George was widely praised for his powerful voice and his vitality in a "larger-than-life portrayal." Reviews praised the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and the German Labor Front, under whose management the "Theater des Volkes has

---

[58] Subsequent performances of the play in repertory alternated *Wallensteins Lager/Piccolomini* with *Wallensteins Tod*.

[59] Herbert Pfeiffer, "Wallenstein," *12-Uhr-Blatt* (Berlin), Nov 12, 1934: n.p.

[60] Leopold Jeßner was a director who later became the Intendant of the Berliner Staatstheater. He reached the height of his prominence and fame as a director in the early half of the 1920s. His productions were marked by an abandonment of naturalistic styles, and his work is perhaps best known for his abstract settings constructed of steps and platforms, primarily using light and color for decorative effect

undertaken the most difficult task of the Schiller-Year, and has scored a great success."[61] Critic Anton Dietzenschmidt called the production "a truly worthwhile, serious Schiller celebration with the full use of all the arts and all the [technical] means."[62] The end of the evening cemented the image of the Theater des Volkes as a theatre for the people (especially the workers), with not only the actors and directors on stage for the "jubilant" applause during the curtain call, but the designers, technicians, and ticket takers as well.

But even the positive reviews mention the lack of nuances in the acting. It is clear that the style was not naturalistic (a style reviled by the Nazis), but more heroic, larger than life. Given the size of the house, one wonders how much nuance was even possible. But the critic in the *Völkischer Beobachter* went much farther and was far more scathing in his review of the production.[63]

He begins by admitting that this powerful work is exceptionally difficult for all those involved, even more so when performed over a seven hour period. He then states that this attempt was not a successful one, although he does say that the actors cannot be reproached too harshly, given the difficulty of the material. He does praise George, and praises some of the settings, acknowledging that they achieved "tremendous effects."[64] But he attacks the "maze of rafters and conglomeration of pillars" of the last act, meant to symbolize the breakdown of the house of Friedland,

---

[61] C.W., "*Wallenstein* im Theater des Volkes," quoted in Shafer, 111.

[62] Quoted in Shafer, 111.

[63] "Die Wallenstein-Trilogie: Schiller-Ehrung im Theater des Volkes," *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), November 13, 1934: 5.

[64] Ibid.

as an "embarrassing relation to the mechanistic set art of a Meyerhold or a Tairov."[65] Readers of the *Völkischer Beobachter* would be familiar with these names because Meyerhold and Tairov were often targets of Nazi attacks on the theatre of the Weimar Republic. Their names alone became representative for a whole artistic aesthetic which the Nazis found repugnant. The reviewer can find a way to fit the content of the plot within Nazi ideology, but the visual reminder of decadent, Communist art cannot be appropriated. Here was one critic who seemed all too aware of Weichert's connections to Expressionism.[66]

The review also lamented the lack of clarity among the performers. It calls to the reader's attention Hitler's speech at the cultural conference in Nuremberg, demanding clarity in German art. The reviewer states this clarity applies not only to "symbolic, confusing extravaganzas" in set design, but to the actor's speech and diction as well. Here, he attacks Paul Wagner (Max Piccolomini), whose voice in the farewell scene with Octavio was disturbing and annoying, suffocating the great art of the text. As for Octavio Piccolomini, Friedrich Ulmer was "as motionless as a wig pole." Then, in a somewhat amusing change of heart, the critic praises the "commendable attempt," but notes that a portrayal of the total trilogy still needs "essential revision" concerning the ability to cope with such a great task.[67]

---

[65] Ibid.

[66] It should also be remembered that at this point in the Third Reich, there was still some question over whether or not a more acceptable, *völkisch* modernism or Expressionism could be achieved. As usual, Goebbels and Rosenberg were on different sides of the issue, although the Expressionism during and immediately following WWI was reviled on both sides of this ideological divide. For more information, see Chapter 1.

[67] "Die Wallenstein-Trilogie: Schiller-Ehrung im Theater des Volkes," *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), November 13, 1934: 5.

This critic clearly came from a more entrenched, fundamentalist camp of Nazi ideology, and had no problem attacking the production for what he sees to be unforgivable disloyalty to Schiller and to the new Nazi theatre. For him, the image of workers gathered on stage in a theatre intended to bring "art to the *Volk*" cannot erase earlier images reminiscent of modernist, symbolic, and degenerate art. According to this critic, the Theater des Volkes had failed in its attempt to represent Nazi ideology on stage.[68]

The theatre produced a more explicit Nazi play the following year. On April 20, 1935, Hitler's birthday, Richard Euringer's *Deutsche Passion 1933* (*German Passion 1933),* had its Berlin premiere at the Theater des Volkes. Originally a radio play broadcast on all German radio channels on Maundy Thursday (April 13) 1933, it was an example of a *Thingspiel*, the promised new theatrical form of Nazi Germany.

The term *Thingspiel* was introduced by the Germanist Professor Carl Niessen in July, 1933. He derived the term from Tacitus's *Germania*, which describes gatherings of Germanic clansmen where judgments and decisions about peace, war and various issues of law were discussed. Niessen chose to apply the term to this new dramatic form because the new Germany would find expression in the community of the people, outside of the stuffy *Reichstag,* and in the realm of nature. The plays were supposed to imitate a process of decision making and make the spectators feel as if they were participating in these ancient gatherings.[69]

---

[68] This attack, even though it was grounded within Nazi ideology, is a good example of why Goebbels banned art criticism in 1936. Any criticism of a performance within a state-sponsored theatre, no matter from what camp it originated, could be viewed as an attack on the state itself.

[69] William Niven, "The Birth of Nazi Drama? Thing Plays," in *Theatre under the Nazis*, 58.

To fulfill this objective, these plays were to take place on vast outdoor stages at sites of significance in German history. As Niven explains, the choice of these outdoor theatres was meant to emphasize

> the organic links between contemporary culture, Nordic nature and the glorious German past. These new plays, by using mass choruses and marching groups, would also help to foster a sense of national community among participants and encourage the audience to identify with the events on stage.[70]

In this new form, the German people were to be the focus of the drama, not a collection of individuals, not a class (as in Communist workers' theatre), but the *Volk* itself. Dramaturg of the Reich Rainer Schlösser maintained that a drama was required that would raise "historical events to a mythical level *above* reality: the fate and character of the German people had to be visible in any dramatic interpretation."[71] These *Thing* plays were designed to strengthen *völkisch* values that, according to the Nazis, had been weakened or suffocated by the Weimar Republic. They were to be the new German drama, the "steely romanticism" dreamed of by Goebbels. They would serve as almost a cultic ceremony in which the audience reaffirmed their racial identity.

A number of measures were taken to foster this new dramatic movement. A circle of authors was set up, and model performances were organized, so that the writers could get a general feeling for the dramaturgical direction of the new form. The first *Thingspiel*, Kurt Eggers's *Das Spiel von Job dem Deutschen* (*The Play about Job, the German*) premiered in Cologne on November 16, 1933, with five

---

[70] Ibid., 55.

[71] Ibid., 57.

hundred actors in front of 4200 spectators. Drama competitions took place, including one organized by the German Labor Front in late 1933, which generated 489 entries for mass-cast plays and 694 works for choruses.[72]

Euringer's *Deutsche Passion 1933* was first performed at the *Reichsfestspiele* (Reich Festival of Plays) in Heidelberg in 1934. Since the *Thingplatz* (the massive outdoor stage) wasn't built in time, the play was staged in the courtyard of Heidelberg Castle. But by the end of 1935, there were 16 playable outdoor stages. One of the largest was at Annaberg, which could accommodate 50,000 people.

In *Deutsche Passion,* a dead German soldier from World War I emerges from his grave and does not recognize his homeland. He meets the War Cripple, the Unemployed Man and his Wife, the Beggar, and children who complain about their treatment by the Allies and the poverty of the children. They are starving and have no bread. He meets the Evil Spirit, who welcomes the Soldier to "Sodom and Gomorrah in Berlin," commenting on the "the orgies they call revues." The soldier cries out for a strong moral leader and calls the people to order, demanding that they commit themselves to work. The people are inspired, and the play ends with the Evil Spirit remarking, "So it really does exist, this Third Reich!"

The play's judgment, invoking the ancient purpose of the *Thing*, is leveled at the Weimar Republic, which is put on trial and condemned for the Treaty of Versailles, rampant capitalism, racial chaos, inflation, unemployment and hunger. In Euringer's allegory, the dead soldier returns from the dead, much like Christ's resurrection after his crucifixion. And, just as Christ's death and resurrection became

[72] Ibid.

the pathway to salvation for Christians, the soldier's resurrection brings about salvation for the German people through his call for a strong leader. But Euringer takes the analogy a step further. The nation of Germany itself is Euringer's Christ, suffering in the Weimar Republic just as Christ suffered on the cross in the original passion plays. In Euringer's Nazi passion play, the *Volk* replaces Christ as the object of suffering.

The plot is especially noteworthy in light of the work of historian Roger Griffin, who has written extensively on fascism as a generic phenomenon. In his examination of the theatres of fascist Italy, Germany and Spain, Griffin posits that a working definition of fascism is vital if one is to explore the aesthetics of performance in a fascist society. He argues that fascism is characterized by a core myth of palingenetic ultranationalism. "Palingenetic" refers to the myth of rebirth or regeneration, but "the adjective first acquires a definitional function when it is combined with the historically quite recent and culture-specific phenomenon of 'nationalism,' and only when this takes a radically anti-liberal stance to become *ultra-nationalism*." Griffin continues:

> what all permutations of fascism have in common…is that their ideology, policies, and any organizations formed to implement them, are informed by a distinctive permutation of the myth that the nation needs to be, or is about to be, resurrected Phoenix-like from the forces of decadence, which, without drastic intervention by the forces of healthy nationalism, threaten to extinguish it for ever.[73]

Griffin then connects his definition to a theatrical practice which supports fascist ideology: "a truly fascist theatrical theory or practice will express itself in a central

[73] Roger Griffin, "Staging the Nation's Rebirth: The Politics and Aesthetics of Performance in the Context of Fascist Studies," in *Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945,* 13.

preoccupation with the victory over decadence by youthful new forces and the resulting birth of a new national community made up of a new type of 'man.'"[74]

The plot of *Deutsche Passion 1933* is an embodiment of Griffin's theories of fascist theatre. A dead man literally rises from the grave to call Germany to arms, calling for the creation of a new man to lead a decadent Germany into a strong and glorious future. It is, using this definition, an ideal Nazi play.

The massive size of the Theater des Volkes and its connection to Strength through Joy made it the perfect choice for the play's performance in Berlin. The "rebirth" of the theatre building (within an National Socialist context) itself echoes Griffin's myth of palingenetic ultranationalism: a new theatre rises, phoenix-like, out of the ashes of decadent Weimar Germany, resulting in a new, healthy German theatre that would be made financially affordable for all German workers. In essence, the play echoes the revolutionary thrust of the workers' theatre, but in this new theatre for the worker that force is redirected into a conservative, fascist revolution.

The performance opened on a barren landscape of barbed wire. Many reviewers commented on the fantastical and eerie mood that characterized the meetings between the soldier and the Evil Spirit. The soldier, also known as the Good Spirit, wore a crown of thorns made from barbed wire, while the Evil Spirit embodied Weimar decay with his shiny bowler hat and the "shrill" jazz music that served as his accompaniment. There was a huge mass choir assembled from 14 choral companies that reviewers saw as particularly powerful, and when the homeless and hungry are motivated by the dead soldier into joining a new Army, they move

[74] Ibid., 21.

towards a radiating light, packed closely together, and sing the Horst Wessel song, the Nazi worker's hymn.

Judging from the reviews, the performance at the Theater des Volkes was extremely powerful and well received. One reviewer writes that the "strongest prize of this premiere is the consciousness of unity between stage and auditorium."[75] Another writes that the struggle for the new community within the play "tears the spectator from the outermost circle into the ring inside."[76] One review, seizing on the allegory of the Passion play, likens the performance to a "consecrated moment," and a "church service."[77] The review in the *Berlin Lokalanzeiger* writes that one must judge this performance not on the dramaturgy (perhaps a comment on the lack of subtlety of the piece, and one that was common to criticisms of the *Thingspiel*) but on the experience, which held the audience under its spell, "for the powerful vision illuminates the fight of the spirit, lights up the struggle for the soul of the German people." This review goes on to say that the singing of the Horst Wessel Song at the end of the performance united the stage and the audience, an ending which "is also symbolic of our common path into the new Reich."[78]

But the audience response may have been shaped on a further level by just

---

[75] Ernst Keienburg, "Tausende werden eine Einheit: Euringer's 'Deutsche Passion' im Theater des Volkes," April 20, 1935, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[76] "Richard Euringers Thingspiel im Großen Schauspielhaus: 'Deutsche Passion 1933' Triumph der namenlosen Spieler—Chöre aus 14 Berliner Großbetrieben," April 20, 1935, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[77] "Deutsche Passion 1933—Richard Euringers Werk im Theater des Volkes," n.d., n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[78] "In den neuen Reich—Euringers 'Deutsche Passion 1933' im Theater des Volkes," April 20, 1935, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

who was there on that opening night. The production premiered on Hitler's birthday, and Hitler himself, along with Goebbels and other high ranking Nazi officials, were present. While it is hard to judge how their presence affected the responses of others, it almost certainly had some effect on audience members and actors alike. Several reviewers mention Hitler'spresence, and one goes as far as to call the production a birthday gift for the *Führer*.

This performance was the embodiment of Nazi ideology on stage. The plot staged a cornerstone of Nazi belief, that only the *Führer* could lead Germany out of the nightmarish devastation of the Weimar Republic. The form of the play was calculated to strengthen national pride and communal bonds. It was a very political work, and the first production at the Theater des Volkes to express Nazi dogma so overtly and with such conviction.

But although the play, both in form and content, seemed to embody all that the Nazis hoped to achieve with the theatre, the *Thingspiel* was eventually phased out. Official support was replaced with suppression beginning in late 1935. By October, the Ministry banned the use of the term *Thingspiel* and stipulated that the term "cult" should not be associated with National Socialism. In May, 1936 the use of declamatory choruses, a key component of the *Thingspiel,* were banned by Goebbels, who called them "banal and bombastic."[79] With this ban, the genre was effectively finished. The plays proved to be a financial nightmare, the outdoor performances were subject to summer rainstorms and acoustical difficulties, and as most critics admitted, the plays were simply not very good. The plays often took the form of

[79] Niven, 75.

biblical allegory, and the Ministry objected to the imposition of Christian "mythology" motifs upon recent history, preferring that the Nazi movement be seen not as an instrument for change or as a means to an end but rather as the end itself. But perhaps even more important is the reality that some of the very aspects of the dramaturgy that were used to identify with the audience—the mass choir, the representative characters—were too close to the dramaturgy of decadent art forms, Expressionism and epic theatre. The larger part of the plays showcased all the aspects of Weimar corruption and sin, such as jazz, dancing and eroticism. But as William Niven points out, a sense of nostalgia in the portrayal of these elements could be implied in the productions.[80] As National Socialism slowly moved into the phase of consolidation, it was no longer useful, or prudent, to remind the people of Weimar in such a graphic way. As in the case of *Wilhelm Tell,* a play that seemed to be wholly, completely pro-Nazi could resist that categorization even in small ways, and become dangerous rather than instructive.

One of the last "classic" productions to be performed at the Theater des Volkes was Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, which premiered in March 1936. The choice of play was directly connected to one of the activities of Strength through Joy, subsidized cruises to the Norwegian fjords. The critic Anton Dietzenschmidt began his review of the production by noting that the beautiful scenery of the play would remind those who had already traveled to Norway of their vacations and that hundreds more would be inspired to make the voyage.[81] The play had long been

[80] Ibid., 77.

[81] Shafer, 113.

popular in Germany and was even known as the Nordic *Faust,* but it was the choice of translator that helped push this production firmly onto Germanic soil: the 1912 translation by the poet Dietrich Eckart, Hitler's friend and mentor.

Eckart was a poet, playwright and journalist, twenty one years Hitler's senior, who had strongly influenced Hitler's ideas about art and culture during the formation of the Nazi Party in Munich. As Henry Grosshans points out in his book *Hitler and the Artists*, Hitler was never one to acknowledge his intellectual and political debts, but his regard for Eckart never faltered, and he ended the second part of *Mein Kampf* with a eulogy to Eckart.[82] Eckart became a member of the Nazis' inner circle in 1919, and handled the negotiations to acquire the *Völkischer Beobachter,* of which he became editor in 1921.

Eckart worked for three years on the translation of *Peer Gynt*. In order to create a more stageable version of the play, he retained 56 roles (plus extras), but reduced the play to ten scenes and eight sets. He wanted to transform the play into a Faustian treatment of the "German search for identity and self-knowledge."[83] George L. Mosse examines how Eckart transformed Peer into the "peasant as Faustian man persistently striving to relate himself to the spirit of life." [84] In his discussion of the concept of the *Volk,* Mosse looks at how Peer became a *völkisch* hero:

> The peasant boor of the original play became . . . a simple, just, and genuine man struggling for salvation and giving himself to the cosmic spirit. With the addition of the Faustian aspect, the character of the ideal peasant was

---

[82] Henry Grosshans, *Hitler and the Artists* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1983), 55.

[83] Ibid., 56.

[84] George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 26-7.

> complete. Rootedness and proximity to nature embraced the simple social virtues as well as the elemental strength derived from primitivism. What emerged was the model for a Volk hero who alone, according to Volkish ideology, could shatter the complex of contemporary society.

Eckart's translation/adaptation foreshadowed the Nazi practice of appropriating material and manipulating it to fit into Nazi philosophy.

The translation, which was first produced at Berlin's Königliches Schauspielhaus in February 1914, was a financial and critical success, receiving favorable reviews in over 80 of Germany's leading newspapers. It received one hundred performances in the next two years, and it was the second most popular play in Germany from 1914 to 1918, as measured by the number of performances.[85] Most German theatres utilized Eckart's translation when producing *Peer Gynt*. Adolf Hitler fondly remembered seeing the play in Berlin with Eckart in 1921.[86]

Once again, Brügmann directed the production at the Theater des Volkes, with Ludwig Hornsteiner designing the sets. One critic wrote that Hornsteiner's set design "stood for more than just the painted backdrop of the performance," uniting with Edvard Grieg's music to give the work dramatic power.[87] Grieg's music was presented along with dances to bridge the many scene changes (although one critic commented that some of these dances, such as the wedding dance ballet in between the first two scenes, were really not appropriate to the play). Karl Künkler wrote that

---

[85] Grosshans, 56.

[86] Glen w. Gadberry, "The First National Socialist Theatre Festival—Dresden 1934," in *Theatre in the Third Reich, the Prewar Years*, 130.

[87] " 'Peer Gynt' Theater des Volkes," March 5, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

the scenery was "an essential helper" to the performance.[88] Gerhard Weise commented that the lighting created a mood, both during and between scenes, "of darkness, mystery, and fantasy, which emphasized an allegorical quality." He went on to speak of the "exotic quality of the costumes" in the Moroccan/Egyptian set (Act Four in the original)," which contrasted with the beautifully colored traditional folk costumes in the Norwegian scenes.[89] The madhouse featured swirling and flashing lights, the mountain scenes were three dimensional. A ship moved across the stage and through a storm and eventually exploded. The troll scene "had a strangeness of the grotesque, which caused goose pimples to run over the backs of the audience,"[90] and created "a fantastic-romantic ghostliness which the supernatural Troll world swirled about in raving fury; an intoxicated ecstasy of color, bodies, masks—an insane bacchanal."[91] The voice of the Troll King was broadcast throughout the house by loudspeakers at one point, which was quite an unfamiliar technique at the time. For the Boyg, Hornsteiner showed only "two giant goggle-eyes which glowed forth through the mountain forest like a dazzling picture in a children's book."[92]

The cast was huge. Farm girls dancing around the bridge encircled the whole stage. Most of the reviews praised the acting: Künkler called Traute Flammes's

---

[88] Karl Künkler, " 'Peer Gynt" im Theater des Volkes," n.d., n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[89] Gerhart Weise, "Dietrich Eckarts 'Peer Gynt,'" *12-Uhr-Blatt* (Berlin), March 6, 1936, n.p., quoted in Shafer, 113.

[90] " 'Peer Gynt' Theater des Volkes," n.p.

[91] Ludwig Sternaux, "Irregang und Läuterung 'Peer Gynt" im Theater des Volkes," quoted in Shafer, 113.

[92] Ibid., quoted in Shafer, 113-4.

Solveig "unobtrusive and appropriate"[93] (again, like Amalie in *Die Räuber*, the model of an Aryan woman), and Marianne Bratt's Aase had a tone of "moving urgency" in her death scene.[94] Herbert Hübner, who played Peer for the entire production, was widely praised: Weise called him a Peer Gynt "of flesh and blood," another critic said that "he enchanted the giant audience and never lost a syllable,"[95] and yet another remarked that his performance only grew stronger as the play wore on, reaching a high point towards the end of the production.[96] Künkler wrote that Hübner didn't always deliver when a strong theatrical expression was needed, but he attributed that to the size of the theatre. He also blamed the space for Tatjana Sais's vocal weaknesses as Anitra. Künkler actually uses the size of the theatre to explain away almost every fault he finds, such as Brügmann's inclination towards the operatic and the flaws in the acting. In fact, he ends his review by remarking that the production overcomes the weaknesses of the large space and through it "delivers a valuable contribution for the creation of the new theatre of the Reich's capital city."[97]

The reviews often focus on the production's contributions to the *Volk*, Germany, and the theatre's ability to elevate and transport its audience. Eckart is called "the *völkisch* champion and noblest and bravest follower of the *Führer*," who

---

[93] Karl Künkler, " 'Peer Gynt" im Theater des Volkes," n.p.

[94] " 'Peer Gynt' Theater des Volkes," March 5, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[95] Quoted in Shafer, 114.

[96] " 'Peer Gynt' Theater des Volkes," n.p.

[97] Karl Künkler, " 'Peer Gynt" im Theater des Volkes," n.p.

presents an "outporing of a Nordic show of nature."[98] Künkler calls the play "theater of the *Volk*." The folk costumes illustrated the people's pride in their culture and homeland. When the play ended, one reviewer noted, "the spectators, having traveled through this colorful world, felt themselves elevated through each act to a kind of pious harmony. The solemn consecration of the poet pulled them upwards and the theatre became a temple—the highest achievement of dramatic art."[99] Even reviews which criticize particular elements of the production take care to mention the play's Nordic character and its connection to the *Volk.* It should be noted that few critics would dare say anything negative about Eckart or his translation, given his standing within the mythology of the Nazi party, but descriptions of the audience's reaction to the performance reinforce the image of a positive, communal reaction to what had essentially become a German myth—albeit one that happens to take place in Norway.[100]

Although *Peer Gynt* was a huge success and the theatre itself and its technology were specifically mentioned as the perfect vehicle for the play and for "journeying" into the soul of man, it was one of the last classic dramas performed at the Theater des Volkes. The acting ensemble was disbanded in 1936 and the actors moved on to other theatres. Although, as Bogusław Drewniak states in his examination of Nazi theatrical policy, Nazi theatre was supposed to focus on the "struggle," or at the very least uplift Aryans "from their daily routine and to aid in the

---

[98] " 'Peer Gynt' Theater des Volkes," n.p.

[99] Quoted in Shafer, 114.

[100] Not everyone was so pleased with this translation/production. Ibsen's daughter-in-law requested that further performances of Eckart's version not be allowed, but her request was ignored. London, "Non-German Drama in the Third Reich," 234.

mastering of life in the National Socialist sense,"[101] the repertoire at the Theater des Volkes shifted to operetta, a form which brings to mind a more escapist, rather than edifying, evening at the theatre. The Theater des Volkes, which throughout Brügmann's tenure as director had offered "revue" style productions of classics, had finally dropped the classics altogether as the mission of the theatre moved more towards the entertainment, rather than the education, of the masses (although one critic pointed out that operetta would lead the uninitiated to an appreciation for opera). Although Nazi theorists and propagandists had deplored theatre's previous position as "a distraction for the wealthy," distraction for the worker became completely acceptable once the regime had been firmly established and there was no longer a need to mobilize the masses in support of the government. Even Hitler acknowledged the need for an escapist, rather than an all-encompassing politicized theatre.[102]

So, as the early gathering phase of National Socialism gave way to the consolidating phase, blonde, blue-eyed Aryans in traditional dress with long braided hair, who fell in love and found happiness with blonde, blue-eyed men, danced and sang on the stage of the Theater des Volkes. The heroic visions of an ideal Germany meant to convert Germans into National Socialists were replaced by sentimental, traditional operettas that attempted to pacify the audience by staging life as it was "in the good old days" of Germany and would be again.

The change in repertoire was reflected in a change in theatre architecture as

---

[101] Drewniak, in *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, 71.

[102] See Chapter 1 for more about Hitler's views on the escapist nature of the theatre.

well. As Shafer notes:

> What had been useful in creating the magical, mythical quality of the classics was not particularly appropriate to the operettas. Furthermore, it was finally decided that the Stalactite columns and dome were 'degenerate art' and should be destroyed. So, in 1938, Poelzig's monumental decoration was torn out in 58 days.[103]

The change to the theatrical space was a physical embodiment of the safer, more banal aesthetic embraced by Rudolf Zindler, the director of the new company.

One of the first operettas staged in the stalactite-free Theater des Volkes was *Himmelblaue Träume,* with book by Georg Burkhard and music by Robert Stolz in 1938. The operetta takes place in an idyllic Swiss alpine hotel, with four couples taking all kinds of "charming detours into happiness."[104] The piece was well known, and the production at the Theater des Volkes was "hyped up to a splendid show." There were dances between scene changes with many dancing girls. Jupp Müller-Marein noted that it was actually more of a revue than an operetta. He went on to call the production a successful "vacation trip" on the stage, filled with elated life.

But the music was the star of the production. It parodied music from "sound films" and operas. The hotel is populated by "pretty," "cute," and "bubbling" performers, including Martl Roch parodying a film star, Gerti von Elmpf and Ilse Riske as sweet girls from "foreign parts" who fall in love with two young boys, and Mara Jakisch, Erwin Hartung, Gretl Theimer and Christian Gollong as the main characters. According to Müller-Marein, the production was well received, with

---

[103] Shafer, 115.

[104] Jupp Müller-Marein, "Bilderbuch vom kleinen Glück: 'Himmelblaue Träume' im Theater des Volkes," *Berlin Lokalanzeiger*, September 11, 1938, n.p; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

"untiring" applause.[105]

Light, frothy and funny, *Himmelblaue Träume* offered the audience the chance to escape and "vacation" to the Swiss Alps, to see lovely Germans (or acceptable foreigners) fall in love. The fact that it was more "revue" in style than operetta didn't seem to take away from the overall enjoyment of the production. After all, this wasn't Shakespeare being polluted by a revue staging—it was "merely entertainment." It did not resemble the type of theatre promised in fiery speeches during the first years of the regime. But now the goal of the Theater des Volkes was to keep the audience happy.

World War II began in September 1939, with Germany's invasion of Poland. The war brought new restrictions about what could be staged—plays from enemy countries were banned, as were eventually all mentions of the military. Such restrictions didn't affect the repertoire of operettas at the Theater des Volkes, nor did the war affect the amount of time, energy and money devoted to the programs of Strength through Joy, and therefore by extension to the Theater des Volkes. In fact, Strength through Joy programs continued to expand during the war, even as state and local governments were forced to cut back on financial subsidies for cultural activities.[106] With the beginning of the war, the mission of Strength through Joy and the Theater des Volkes became even more important. The *Deutsches Bühnen-Jahrbuch* of 1943 pointed out that after a hard day's work, ordinary Germans needed to relax and enjoy the light, colorful, escapist operettas which would bring them

---

[105] Ibid.

[106] Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany*, 75.

happiness; in fact, bringing happiness to the workers was a task of military importance.[107]

A little over one year after the start of the war, the Theater des Volkes staged *Über alles siegt die Liebe* (*Love Triumphs over All)*. The book, based on Gutzkow's comedy *Zopf und Schwert* (*Plait and Sword*), was written by Bruno Hardt-Warden, with music by Edmund Nick. Nick was the composer of the music that replaced Mendelsohn's in the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and was accused of having a "trivial salon style" by Dr. Fritz Stege, at the Theater des Volkes in 1934. His music, perhaps more suited to an operetta than Shakespeare, was not criticized at all in this production. Critic Fred Hamel called the score "the revolutionizing experience of the evening."[108] Nick included waltzes, polkas, marches, foxtrots, and gavottes, all with a skillful hand. This team, along with director Rudolf Zindler, was behind the majority of the operettas staged at the Theater des Volkes until its closure in 1944.

The plot was loosely based on German history, telling the story of Wilhelmine, daughter of King Friedrich William I, as she avoids being married off by her father and finally finds love with her beloved, the hereditary prince of Bayreuth. Reviews acknowledge that the book might be a bit free with historical events, but that freedom, as well as the focus on just this one event, is permissible and effective in the operetta, with the characters loving and singing after their heart's desire.[109] Another

---

[107] Schafer, 115.

[108] Fred Hamel, "Rehabilitierung der Operette. Edmund Nick: 'Über alles siegt die Liebe'—Theater des Volkes," October 2, 1940, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[109] Gerhard Schultze, " 'Über alles siegt die Liebe': historische Operette im Theater des

critic writes that even if it is not historically faithful, the framework of history remains genuine.[110]

The set, designed by Ludwig Hornstiener, was delicate and soft, using pastel colors. A lively drinking and smoking scene in the court of the king, the *Tabakskollegium* (tobacco committee meeting) was singled out by every review as a huge success. The performers were widely praised, as well. Ingeborg Döderlein did not portray Princess Wilhelmine as the cool and bitter princess of history;[111] she was glowing, attractive, lovely to look at, with a beautifully clear singing voice.[112] Eugen Rex as a chamber servant to the king provided comic relief, commenting on the action and "agitating the laughter muscles of the public."[113] Friedrich Otto Fischer's "soldier king" was an excellent character study, portraying him not as a hard man but as a gruff human being.[114]

In his review "Rehabilitierung der Operette. Edmund Nick: 'Über alles siegt die Liebe—Theater des Volkes," Fred Hamel described this production as a "breath of fresh air" rather than the "overly perfumed air one is used to breathing in at operettas, … re-establishing the good reputation of the operetta with clean artistry,

---

Volkes," *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), October 2, 1940; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[110] H.E. Weinschenk, "Neue Operette im Theater des Volkes. 'Über alles siegt die Liebe': Die Zeit des Soldatenkönigs wird auf der Bühne lebendig," n.d., n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[111] Beda Prilipp, "Rokokolyrik und Grenadiermarsch. 'Über alles siegt die Liebe' im Theater des Volkes," October 2, 1940, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[112] Weinschenk.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

taste and style." Not merely a "multicolored flitter escape," Hamel noted that this production avoided the danger of a cheap operetta-revue with restrained choreography and wonderful music. Hamel concluded by announcing that director Rudolf Zindler was taking the Theater des Volkes down a new path filled with much promise.[115]

Über alles siegt die Liebe serves as a model for the ideal *völkisch* operetta. It avoided the pitfalls of "flitter-revue," a charge formerly leveled at operettas of the Weimar Republic, and by focusing on eighteenth century Prussian history harkened back to another glorious time in the city of Berlin. There was also a great deal of focus placed on the character of Friedrich Wilhelm I, the "soldier king," even though the operetta was ostensibly a love story about his daughter. Several reviews discuss the "golden age of the soldier king," acknowledging, in true National Socialist ideological fashion, that any historical age is merely a reflection of its leader. Yes, this production featured pretty blonde German girls, but it went a step beyond that, placing the love story within a grand historical context, and giving it political weight.

Fast on the heels of this great success came *Eine entzückende Frau (A Charming Woman),* a far more standard operetta. Based on Richard Heuberger's operetta *Ihre Exzellenz*, this incarnation continued Rudolf Zindler's success. The music was revised by Zindler and Bruno Hardt-Warden, resulting in a highly demanding score that borrows heavily from Johann Strauss in the second act. The Strauss family could have provided a potential problem to the Nazis due to partial Jewish ancestry, but since Hitler adored the music, mention of the family's racial

[115] Hamel.

background was forbidden and their music continued to be performed.[116] The plot is a complicated one, centering around an ex-Viennese theatre star, Ninich, compromising love letters from a former lover who is now in line for the throne, and a parade of lovers. Most reviews acknowledge that the plot is complex, but they point to Zindler's skilled direction and the success of the production which far exceeded the success of the original.[117]

Amidst other operettas staged in 1941, such as *Saison in Salzburg* and *Ballnacht in Florenz,* the Theater des Volkes held a special tribute to Paul Lincke. Lincke was an operetta composer, known as the father of Berlin operettas, who had been successful in the Wilhelmine era, but his popularity waned during the time Weimar Republic, when operettas borrowed more heavily from jazz and American musical forms. His work enjoyed something of a renaissance during the Third Reich, partially because he was one of a few non-Jewish operetta composers, and his music was described in the press as "healthy," and "un-American."[118]

On November 6, 1941, a special performance of his most famous operetta, *Frau Luna,* was staged at the Theater des Volkes in honor of Lincke's seventy-fifth birthday. *Frau Luna* was Lincke's most famous work, which told the utopian story of Berlin mechanic Fritz Steppke and his balloon ride to the moon. This production was especially notable, as the audience was filled with the war-wounded, munitions workers, and members of the Nazi elite, such as Dr. Ley and the mayor of Berlin, Dr.

---

[116] Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 244.

[117] Franz Koeppen, " Heubergers 'Entzückende Frau' Eine Neubearbeitung im Theater des Volkes," October 8, 1940, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[118] Jelavich, 244.

Steeg. The special tribute featured set designs from Benno von Arent, was directed by Zindler, and was received with "storms of applause" that only grew stronger from scene to scene.[119] The performance concluded with a moving tribute as Lincke received flowers from wounded soldiers.

This tribute stands out among the later operettas at the Theater des Volkes. Like *Über alles siegt die Liebe*, the event drew on great moments from Berlin's past, perhaps in an effort to turn people's thoughts away from worries over the city's present and future. But the political nature of the performance was not merely an illusion, as in the case of *Über alles siegt die Liebe*. The makeup of the audience—the wounded soldiers, the munitions workers, Robert Ley—lent the performance a heightened sense of the contemporary, regardless of Lincke's Wilhelmine operetta. There could be no lasting escapism with this performance, but rather a conscious move to glorify the sacrifice being made by ordinary Germans for the sake of the *Volk*. The public "performance" of that sacrifice to the people's community strongly marks the event as an ideal Nazi drama, almost regardless of the performance of the operetta on stage.

As Berlin was bombed towards the end of the war, the Theater des Volkes suffered structural damage. The programs began to include information on what to do during an air-raid siren. Finally, on September 1, 1944, the Theater des Volkes was closed, along with all other theatres, as part of the "total war effort."[120]

---

[119] "Berlin feiert Paul Lincke (Frau Luna)," November 7, 1941, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[120] The theatre was restored after the war and was reincarnated as the Friedrichstadt Palast until it was torn down in 1984.

The repertoire shift at the Theater des Volkes closely mirrors the ever-changing landscape of what was permissible in Nazi theatre. At first, plays showcasing a heroic struggle, such as *Die Räuber* or *Deutsche Passion 1933*, were more acceptable. The struggle for Nazi Germany was recent, and the Nazi elite were well aware that despite the seizure of power, there was still work to be done in terms of "winning over" the German people.

But as the regime became entrenched, there wasn't the need for an overt daily struggle—in fact, the Nazis wanted to give the impression at home and abroad that normalcy had been achieved in the Third Reich. This period also coincided with more widespread "disappearances" of Jews and other political opponents of the Reich. The regime certainly did not want people to think about their friends and neighbors disappearing. A semblance of status quo was to be maintained at all costs. In this new climate, plays like *Deutsche Passion 1933* became liabilities rather than assets. At a theater whose main audience was to be the working class, operetta became the means of diverting people's attention away from promises not kept, focusing that attention instead on light and familiar imagery of an idyllic Germany.

Once the war began, the focus became all about escape, even more so as the war dragged on and started to go badly for Germany. The operettas would allow the audience to escape the reality of their lives and forget, if only just for a few hours, about the war that was draining the country of men and resources, as well as the disappearance of thousands of Jews, gays, Jehovah's Witnesses, and political dissenters.

But by and large, despite the shifting terrain of what was acceptable, there was

no overt challenge to the Nazi ideal at the Theater des Volkes. There were some productions that pushed at the boundaries of what was acceptable stylistically—like the symbolic sets of *Wallenstein*—or that lost their *völkisch* cache—like *Deutsche Passion 1933*—but by and large, the theatre did try to educate the worker about classical German drama and, even within operetta, stage an idealized version of Germany and the German people. If there were several shifts in how this new workers' theatre was to fulfill its mission as outlined by Strength through Joy, they only reflected the shifts taking place within the higher levels of the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda.

Chapter Three: Deutsches Theater

If the problems in staging the *Volk* at the Theater des Volkes could be attributed to shifts within Nazi theatrical policy itself, the reasons behind the inconsistent representation of a new national culture at the Deutsches Theater were far more complex. Yes, shifting cultural policy affected the Deutsches Theater as well, but there were other additional factors that had a direct impact on the Deutsches Theater's success in fulfilling the Nazi goals of staging plays appropriate for the new German Reich. Changes in management, the eventual presence of a strong "apolitical" Intendant, Heinz Hilpert, and the direct intervention by Joseph Goebbels in a growing rivalry between the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda-controlled Deutsches Theater and the Berliner Staatstheater (which as a Prussian State Theatre was controlled by Hermann Göring) would all compromise the expression of Nazi ideology on the stage of the Deutsches Theater.

The Deutsches Theater was opened in 1883 by Adolf L'Arronge. It was a private theatre whose repertoire consisted of national classics, staged in the realistic vein of the Meiningen Players.[1] In 1894, Otto Brahm, the president of the recently disbanded Freie Bühne, took a ten year lease on the theatre. As Intendant of the Deutsches Theater, Brahm's repertoire focused mainly on the work of contemporary authors, especially that of Gerhart Hauptmann, although classics were still performed at the theatre (Brahm's first production was Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*). It was

[1] A company run by Duke Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen from 1866-1890, famous for his attention to historical accuracy and a realistic ensemble cast.

during this period that the intersection of theatre and the state first affected the Deutsches Theater. After the first public staging of Hauptmann's *The Weavers*, a naturalistic play about the hardships facing Silesian weavers, William II gave up his box at the Deutsches Theater and had its royal coat of arms removed.[2]

In 1905, L'Arronge accepted Max Reinhardt's application as the next lessee of the Deutsches Theater. Within months, Reinhardt and his brother Edmund had raised enough money to buy the theatre from L'Arronge, and Reinhardt would remain in charge of the Deutsches Theater for the next twenty-eight years.

Reinhardt reduced his theatre investments in Berlin in the early 1930s, and in 1932 he turned the management of the Deutsches Theater over to Karl Heinz Martin and Rudolf Beer.[3] Martin was the previous director of the Berlin Volksbühne and Beer had been the head of the Deutsches Volkstheater in Vienna. In Reinhardt's announcement of the change in management, he urged the two new directors to maintain the tradition of the Deutsches Theater, taking special care to note that the theatre had "maintained itself without subvention of any kind and therefore free from all political and partisan connection."[4] The inclusion of this statement was surely not an afterthought on Reinhardt's part. Reinhardt was a continual target of the Nazi press, and the political upheaval of the last years of the Weimar Republic was one of the reasons Reinhardt had decided to turn over the management of the theatre in the first place. Reinhardt clearly wanted the Deutsches Theater to remain above the

---

[2] John Willett, *The Theatre of the Weimar Republic* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 17.

[3] Wayne Kvam, "The Nazification of Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater Berlin," in *Theater Journal*, vol 40, no 3 (October 1988), 357.

[4] Max Reinhardt, quoted in Kvam, 357.

political fray. But Reinhardt's wishes themselves pose an interesting question that would face the Deutsches Theater throughout the years of the Third Reich: was it possible to remain free from politics in an overtly politicized society?

Martin and Beer quickly learned the difficulty of remaining free from politics on December 23, 1932, with the production of Julius Hay's historical drama *Gott, Kaiser und Bauer*. Hay, a Hungarian with a Marxist background, wrote a play that critically depicted the medieval German past. This was the same period the Nazis found so central to their mythology of a new Germany, and to see it criticized was infuriating. The play became the cause of demonstrations, and the play was banned by the Berlin police after the fourth performance.[5] This resulted in the resignation of Rudolf Beer and the temporary closing of the Deutsches Theater.

On January 27, 1933, Reinhardt issued a new contract and named Dr. Carl Ludwig Achaz and Heinrich Neft as joint directors of the Deutsches Theater. Dr. Achaz's father, a business magnate and Privy Councilor, provided the necessary funding for the theatre. Neft was a manager of the Volksbühne, who, according to a report in the January issue of *Der Autor*, "does not lean toward unfruitful experimentation and in whose hands the business side of the theatre should be secure."[6] In the same report, the author mentions that Dr. Achaz agreed to take over the theatre after being assured that Max Reinhardt would advise him artistically and agree to direct productions as well.

This collaboration between the new management and Reinhardt was not to be,

---

[5] For more information about the production and the disruptions that plagued it, see Julius Hay, *Geboren 1900: Erinnerungen* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1971).

[6] Richard Wilde, "Die grossen Berliner Theaterkrisen," *Der Autor* 8 (January 1933): 1.

however. On January 30, three days after Reinhardt issued the new contract regarding the management of the Deutsches Theater, Hitler was named Reich Chancellor of Germany. Reinhardt's last production at the Deutsches Theater was Hoffmannsthal's *Das grosse Welttheater*. Reinhardt stayed for the premiere on March 1, then left Germany for the last time. The new regime wasted no time in insinuating itself into the management of the Deutsches Theater. Wulf Bley, a coworker of Hans Hinkel at the militant Combat League for German Culture, was named special advisor to the Achaz-Neft directorship.

Achaz and Neft persuaded Karl Heinz Martin to remain at the Deutsches Theater, and his production of *Ewiges Volk* on April 4, 1933 signaled a new political direction for the Deutsches Theater. *Ewiges Volk* was written by Nazi party member Kurt Kluge. Set in Carinthia, Austria, in 1918, the play portrays a group of rebellious Austrian army officers who attempt to rally the peasants against the approaching Serbian army. The play itself is an archetypal example of early Nazi playwriting. It is set in 1918, at the end of World War I. It was in this traumatic period following Germany's defeat that the new national character, according to Nazi mythology, was forged. The play focuses on the collaboration between two very important stereotypical characters within Nazi mythology, army officers and peasants. By including these two groups of people, Kluge was able to represent strong military leadership and a mystical connection to the land, both of which were integral to the Nazi concept of the *Volk*. And it is through their collaboration that the Austrians try to protect their homeland, a clear allusion to the cooperation between Hitler, the ultimate leader of the German people, and the German people themselves, which

according to the Nazis resulted in the new German Reich.

The reviews of the production were mixed. Not surprisingly, the *Völkischer Beobachter* lavishly praised the production:

> The premiere performance of *Ewiges Volk* in the Deutsches Theater is a revolutionary step in the theatre history of Berlin. For the first time since one can remember, this stage made the conscious attempt to perform a cultural service in accord with the interests of a national Germany. …A German ensemble performing in the Deutsches Theater the play of a German dramatist.[7]

For the Nazi paper, this production marked an unquestionable shift in the repertoire of a theatre described as a liberal stronghold, run by a Jew. It was a clear appropriation—or in the view of the Nazis, a clear redemption—of a bastion of German culture, now being used to serve the Reich by staging *völkisch* ideology on its hallowed stage.

But other papers were a bit more even in their reviews. Herbert Ihering pointed out that the ethical conflicts were not fully mastered, but that the play "touched upon experiences that were relevant to every German."[8] Wayne Kvam, in his article on the Nazification of the Deutsches Theater, remarks that most reviews mention Kluge's "bombastic rhetoric" and the one-dimensionality of the characters, especially the peasants.[9] This one-dimensionality and over-the-top rhetorical style was a common feature of Nazi playwriting, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. It is ironic, however, that the peasants who were to represent the powerful mythical connection between the German people and the German land were the

---

[7] Quoted in Carl Ludwig Achaz [Duisberg], "Lebenslauf-Addenda," quoted in Kvam, 360.

[8] Herbert Ihering, quoted in Kvam, 360.

[9] Kvam, 361.

characters to suffer the most from this stylistic failing.

The most notable thing about the production was Martin's omission of the final act of the play. With this omission, the play ended with a battle charge. This production choice closely followed Nazi ideology and aesthetic. The military nature of the action becomes the clear focal point of the play, and the final image of the production was the play's hero, Sgt. Lewt, leading the peasants toward the enemy with the battle cry "Carinthia the way it was!"[10] Using modern methods—a modern military—these fighters hope to restore Carinthia to its past glory, a sentiment that mirrors the Nazi vision for Germany. According to Kvam this production choice did nothing to counter the bombastic nature of the play itself. However, it did stage a major piece of *völkisch* rhetoric in a clear manner.

The production was cancelled after five performances. The explanation offered by the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* blamed the Jews:

> The regular audience of the Deutsches Theater, which was fanatically devoted to the productions of Max Reinhardt, has now turned its back on the theatre; it was primarily a Jewish public…They behave as if Achaz has driven away the great Reinhardt.[11]

Achaz himself echoed this justification two years later, writing that the Jewish public stayed away, but a new theatre public had yet to emerge.[12] While the production may have given "expression to the inner transformation of the German people,"[13] Kvam and others fail to cite one compelling reason for the production's hasty exit. It just

---

[10] Kurt Kluge, *Das Ewige Volk* (Berlin: Propylaen, 1933), 4.2: 99-100.

[11] Collected in Achaz , "Lebenslauf-Addenda," quoted in Kvam, 361.

[12] Achaz, "Lebenslauf," 11, quoted in Kvam, 361.

[13] Ibid.

was not a very good play, despite how clearly it expressed the accepted Nazi ideology. Achaz and other Nazi critics were correct in noting that the public stayed away; however that may have been because they were accustomed to high quality theatrical productions, not because of their loyalty to Reinhardt.

In May 1933, Heinrich Neft resigned his position as co-director of the Deutsches Theater. The official reason given was his insistence that the swastika flags at the Deutsches Theater be lowered at dusk, according to an old agreement, despite Wulf Bley's insistence that they remain raised. Neft agreed to raise the flags after Bley called the SA, and hastily agreed to Bley's offer to resign. When Neft resigned, Karl Heinz Martin left the theatre as well. But according to Kvam, their departure probably had more to do with their Jewish wives and liberal political reputations (due to their association with the Volksbühne).[14] Regardless of the official reason, the resignations centralized artistic power in the hands of Achaz, who was clearly willing to toe the party line, despite his initial desire to receive counsel from Max Reinhardt. This was the third shift in management within a little over a year, the second within the four months of the Nazi regime. In Achaz, the Nazis believed that they had an Intendant in place who would stage plays in keeping with Nazi ideology and developing artistic policies.

The first play Achaz directed at the Deutsches Theater was Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*.[15] This play, one of Hitler's favorites, is easily manipulated to fit within Nazi ideology. The leaders of three Swiss cantons join together to defeat an external

[14] Kvam, fn, 363.

[15] For an analysis of Schiller's importance within Nazi ideology, see Chapter Two.

oppressor (Gessler and the Austrians). Tell, a peasant, kills Gessler as the tyrant is about to run down a poor mother begging for mercy for her imprisoned son, and in doing so Tell leads to the liberation of the Swiss people. In Nazi ideology, it is yet another example of a Germanic people—both peasants and nobility—coming together to defeat a tyrannical rule of government, an action that foreshadowed their own struggle to defeat the Weimar Republic, the Communists, and the Jews. Tell, the national hero of Switzerland, becomes a national hero of the German people, and it is no wonder that the play was the most performed Schiller play during the first two seasons under the Nazi regime.[16]

Achaz's production appeared to take some rather large liberties with the text. The major changes streamlined the play's action, simplified the characterization and the conflict, and made Tell a more heroic character. The amplification of Tell's heroism and leadership fall into line with the Nazi idea of *Führerprinzip* (leadership principle). The belief in strong leadership and submission to that leader was a central one within Nazi ideology. By strengthening Tell's heroic qualities and his role as a leader, he could unquestionably fill the role of leader, a role which was so important to the Nazis.

The most drastic changes to the script occurred in the final act of the play. The character of Duke Johann of Swabia was completely eliminated, and the liberation of the Swiss people is portrayed through songs, bells, flags, and march music celebrating their hero, Tell.[17] The celebrations are unmistakably reminiscent of

[16] Until Hitler personally banned the play from production and the classroom in 1941. See Chapter Two for more information.

[17] Kvam, 364.

Nazi party rallies, a choice too overt to be accidental.

For a few critics, such as the critic from the *12-Uhr-Blatt*, the changes to the fifth act were unwelcomed: "Schiller did not intend it to be all that simple."[18] But others were more sympathetic. Paul Kersten wrote:

> The fiery passion of the poetry merges with the enthusiastic temperament of a director who understands...the spirit of our times and shows us in the theatre the mirror of the present.[19]

Clearly the parallels between the historical liberation of the Swiss and the present day "liberation" of Germany was not lost on Kersten, nor, one can assume, on the rest of the audience as well.

Attilla Hörbiger, who had played the heroic Sgt. Lewt in *Ewiges Volk*, portrayed Tell in the production. He portrayed Tell as a courageous, if one-dimensional, folk hero. Equally one-dimensional was Heinrich George's portrayal of Gessler. But despite the lack of subtlety in the production, the audience response was very positive. The audience responded "as if possessed."[20] And unlike the ill-fated production of *Ewiges Volk*, *Wilhelm Tell* played to packed houses for five weeks. But there was some political maneuvering behind the initial success of the production. According to Achaz, Goebbels "called upon the political organization to attend the theatre."[21] Goebbels made sure that a large portion of the audience was sympathetic to the Nazi regime, and he further validated the importance of the performance by

---

[18] C.R., "*Wilhelm Tell*: Im Deutschen Theater," *12-Uhr-Blatt*, 6 May 1933, n.p., clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[19] Collected in Achaz, "Lebenslauf-Addenda," 7-10, quoted in Kvam, 365.

[20] C.R., "*Wilhelm Tell*: Im Deutschen Theater."

[21] Achaz, "Lebenslauf-Addenda," 11-12, quoted in Kvam, 364.

attending the premiere with Hans Hinkel.

Goebbels was so impressed with the production that he arranged for an engagement of the production at the massive Westphalia Hall in Dortmund for nine days in June. During this engagement, on June 16, 1933, Max Reinhardt sent a letter from England officially transferring ownership of the Deutsches Theater to the German state. In the letter, Reinhardt wrote that he had no choice but to "offer to Germany the possession of my life's work."[22] Although Reinhardt had not been involved with the theatre in over three months, the letter made his departure from the Deutsches Theater official. The theatre remained closed for the summer as Reinhardt's creditors tried to decide what to do with the building. Eventually, a nonprofit corporation was formed to assure the future of the Deutsches Theater. Achaz was chosen as the corporation's director, and he remained as the head of the theatre as well.

The theatre finally reopened in January 1934. During the hiatus, there was a definite political shift in Nazi theatrical policy as Goebbels moved to centralize his control over artistic life in Germany. During those seven months, Goebbels created the office of Dramaturg of the Reich and appointed Rainer Schlösser to the position, and created the Chamber of Culture, making membership in the theatre branch, the Theatre Chamber, compulsory for all working theatre artists.[23] The Deutsches Theater, like every other theatre in Germany, was now under the direct control of the Theatre Chamber and Goebbels's Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and

---

[22] Max Reinhardt, *Max Reinhardt Schriften*, ed. Hugo Fetting (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1974), 223.

[23] See Chapter One for a more extensive discussion of these political organizations.

Propaganda. What did this mean for Achaz and the Deutsches Theater? As Achaz did not seem particularly interested in challenging Party notions of the new German theatre, there seems to be no evidence that this development changed anything in regards to Achaz and the way he ran the Deutsches Theater. If anything, this centralization was an attempt to eliminate the contradictory voices trying to establish what Nazi culture would look like, and was an advantage for Achaz (or any other politically committed director) trying to negotiate the shifting tides of Nazi cultural policy—as long as one agreed with Goebbels.

In fact, Goebbels came to Achaz's aid when Nazi conservatives criticized Achaz's first production of the newly reopened Deutsches Theater, Hans Kyesr's radio play *Rembrandt vor Gericht*. Achaz attempted to deviate from the style of *Ewiges Volk* and *Wilhelm Tell* with the production, offering an interpretation that took few liberties with the script, and included historical costumes and reprints of Rembrandt's paintings to create the appropriate atmosphere.[24] The radio play had many problems, including a visitation from Jesus Christ at the end of the play to forgive the dead Rembrandt for his sins that reviewers found unsuccessful. But although Kyser was a member of the Nazi Party, more militant Nazi critics were unhappy that the play did not speak more directly to the issues currently facing Germany.

Goebbels's response to these criticisms was swift, asserting that a playwright who represents the poor and oppressed earns "the respect of the National Socialist state," even if the work is not completely successful as a theatrical production.

[24] Kvam, 369.

Goebbels continues "Just as I reject all moral prudishness in the area of the arts decisively, so do I repudiate every pedantic objection to the German dramatist's choice of subject matter decisively."[25] Goebbels cleary did not have a problem telling dramatists what they could and could not stage—after all, the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda developed very clear guidelines declaring what plays were acceptable. He did, however, have a problem with anyone challenging his decisions over what was acceptable, and was quick to reassert his ideological control over Nazi cultural policy, much to Achaz's benefit in this case.

Achaz retreated to more familiar ground in his next production, Friedrich Hebbel's *Die Nibelungen*, a nineteenth-century German classic that could be interpreted to have contemporary relevance. Achaz described his reasons for choosing this play:

> I considered it my duty to bring to the stage of the Deutsches Theater this heroic epic of German primeval times, this most vital cultural treasure of the entire German people, whose subject it is to remind the German male of his unconditional loyalty to his self-chosen leader.[26]

Achaz again chose to severely alter the text, eliminating the third part of the play dramatizing the triumph of Christianity. And, as in earlier productions, Achaz gave the play a strong, identifiable German hero: Hagen, Sigfried's killer. Achaz chose to make Hagen the play's hero because of his loyalty to the *Führer*. The reaction to the production was also familiar; critical, with only the Nazi papers giving their approval. As in earlier misfires, Nazi sympathizers blamed the lack of enthusiastic response on

---

[25] Joseph Goebbels, "Freiheit des dichterischen Schaffens: Ein Brief des Reichministers Dr. Joseph Goebbels," reprinted in *Der Autor* 9 (January 1934), 2.

[26] Achaz, "Lebenslauf," 17, quoted in Kvam, 370.

the bourgeois theatre-going public that had been so sympathetic to Reinhardt and the theatre of the decadent Weimar Republic. Kvam argues that *Die Nibelungen* was too sophisticated for the Goebbels-recruited audience, while the regular Deutsches Theater audience was simply not interested in Achaz's attempt to combine classical drama with propaganda.[27] I would suggest that another reason for the play's failure lies in the overall quality of the production. Achaz drastically altered the text and tried to insert Nazi ideology into the classic text, but the end product was clumsy rather than seamless, bombastic, and over-the-top. In trying to stage a *völkisch* national drama at any cost, the production simply failed to move all but the most die-hard of Nazi supporters. Achaz attempted to comply with Nazi theatrical policy, but the audience found the production lacking in artistic merit.

In the end, the artistic inconsistency at the Deutsches Theater combined with the political fallout from the fight for control over Nazi theatrical policy ended Achaz's tenure. The last production under his leadership was *Stille Gäste*, a comedy that featured a ghost story and a love story, written by the Austrian playwright Richard Billinger. A light comedy, it was a reasonable choice to follow the epic *Nibelungen*. The play had already had a successful run in Leipzig in December 1933.[28] But from the beginning, there were signs of trouble with the Deutsches Theater production.

In the play, the Austrian common people were not heroic archetypes of the German *Volk*; rather, they were normal people with normal foibles such as greed and

[27] Kvam, 371.

[28] Ibid., 372.

lust. Achaz had named his assistant Karlheinz Stroux as the director of the production, and according to Achaz, the young assistant allowed these imperfections to be dramatized, resulting in harsh condemnation from Nazi censors. Achaz claimed that he had tried to fix the production before the dress rehearsal by eliminating "the most obvious dangers," but that the actors had reverted back to the earlier interpretation and "altered the play as a whole." After the premiere, Achaz was forced to bring the performance "back under appropriate artistic control" in order to satisfy Rainer Schlösser.[29]

But the damage had already been done. The loyal Nazi press attacked the production, calling the play perverted and primitive. Johannes Schwarz von Berk accused Billinger of ignoring the realities of the new Third Reich:

> Soldiers and workers have provided the entire nation with a new model of conduct. The young are fresh and happy, as if twenty years of hunger and doubt did not lie behind us. And after such a year of healing, one sets before the public a comedy whose entire content can be summed up in the following words: a wanton vacationer, ... a man-crazed butcher's widow, and a deformed girl exhaust themselves in competing for a muscular butcher's apprentice.[30]

In the eyes of von Berk, the production of *Stille Gäste* was a large step backwards to the empty, dangerous perversity of the Weimar republic. Even though other critics lauded Billinger's work and mentioned the enthusiastic audience response, the production only ran for 24 days. The run was certainly longer than the five performances of Kluge's *Ewiges Volk*, but noticeably shorter than the successful run of *Wilhelm Tell*. Since the supportive reviews of the production do mention

---

[29] Achaz, "Lebenslauf," 18-19, in Kvam, 372.

[30] Johannes Schwarz von Berk, "Die stillen Gäste—von gestern werden noch einmal vorlaut: Ist das unser deutsches Theater?" *Der Angriff*, 6 April 1934, in Kvam, 372.

enthusiastic audience response and with Bruno Werner of the *Deutsche Allegmeine Zeitung* calling it the "best production we have seen in a Berlin theatre for a long while,"[31] one can only conclude that the negative response from the Nazi regime was to blame for the length of the run.

Stille Gäste was the final production of the Achaz-run Deutsches Theater. The increased regulation and centralization of the Nazi's theatrical policy set the wheels in motion that led to Achaz's dismissal. The Theatre Law, issued in May 1934, made all administrative appointments subject to the approval of the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda, giving Joseph Goebbels and Rainer Schlösser control over who would run the Deutsches Theater. The Ministry then went on to arrange for a long-term lease of the theatre from Reinhardt's creditors. The Deutsches Theater became a theatre of the Reich, fully subsidized by the Ministry. Achaz's role as director of the nonprofit corporation running the Deutsches Theater was nullified, and he was no longer financially necessary to the theatre.

Achaz had angered the ideologues of the party with the *Stille Gäste*, but his artistic track record also had a direct hand in his dismissal. Of the five plays staged under his leadership, only *Wilhelm Tell* was a clear success, and that may have been due to Goebbels's audience recruitment. While no play, with the exception of *Ewiges Volk*, was a clear disaster, there were also no leaps towards greatness. Now that the theatre was a theatre of the Reich, Goebbels wanted it to be a showplace for German culture, and he needed a director who could raise the Deutsches Theater to new heights. This was especially true in light of the appointment of Gustaf Gründgens as

[31] Bruno Werner, "Billinger: *Stille Gäste*," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 April 1934, n.p., clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

the Intendant of the Berliner Staatstheater.[32] If the Deutsches Theater was going to be the best theater in Berlin, Goebbels needed to find someone equally accomplished to serve as Intendant. For that role, Goebbels appointed Heinz Hilpert, a former assistant to Reinhardt at the Deutsches Theater and the Intendant of the Volksbühne from 1932 to 1934.

What is noteworthy about Goebbels's decision is that it clearly valued artistic merit over compliance with Nazi policy and ideology. It is not surprising that Goebbels wanted the Deutsches Theater to be a showplace of German culture, especially given Goebbels's self-promotion as a true patron of fine art and his rivalry with Göring. But what is surprising is that he was willing to put Nazi theatrical policy at risk to do so. Goebbels was in charge of promoting Nazi propaganda, but was not willing to stage that propaganda at the expense of theatrical quality. With the removal of Achaz and subsequent appointment of Hilpert, the Deutsches Theater made a marked shift away from an attempt to faithfully stage the *Volk* as outlined in Nazi ideology and theatrical policy.

Goebbels had been planning to appoint Hilpert to the post of Intendant as early as December 1933. After attending a production of the operetta *Die Kaiserin* at the Volksbühne, he wrote in his diary, "brilliant direction by Hilpert. I will get him when I have the theatre."[33] But the relationship between Hilpert and the Ministry was troubled from the beginning. A press report issued on June 2, 1934 revealed that

---

[32] William Grange calls this rivalry a competition for the "unofficial title of Reich Theatre Impresario," in "Ordained Hands on the Altar of Art: Gründgens, Fehling and Hilpert in Berlin," in *Theatre in the Third Reich, The Prewar Years: Essays on Theatre in Nazi Germany*, ed. Glen W. Gadberry ,79.

[33] Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: sämtliche Fragmente*, Teil I: *Aufzeichnungen 1924-1941*, 4 vols, ed. by Elke Fröhlich (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1987), II, 468.

Hilpert intended to stage Ödön von Horváth's new play *Himmelwärts*.[34] Given the subject matter of Horváth's *Tales from the Vienna Woods,* a play about complacent townspeople who watch the Nazis' rise to power, and Horvath's flight from Germany in 1933, it is not surprising that the Ministry was not pleased. Rainer Schlösser declared that producing the Horváth play would be contrary to the aims of the German theatre. Alfred Mühr, who would later become the dramaturg of the Berliner Staatstheater, published an article about Hilpert and asked if the piece was not "too bold in the old liberal sense" of the theatre. He wondered if Hilpert was not maintaining the "political-cultural equilibrium" and was failing to "uphold the spirit of political security" of the theatre with which he had been entrusted. Mühr went so far as to suggest that a dramaturgical advisor or political-cultural supervisory body be assigned to Hilpert and the Deutsches Theater to teach the present artistic and political "responsibility" of the theatre.[35] Hilpert, perhaps realizing this was a fight he could not win, did not push on the matter of the Horváth piece, but he did on another matter, the hiring of Erich Engel. Engel's association with Bertolt Brecht made him an unpopular choice with the regime, and Hilpert's initial request to hire him at the Deutsches Theater was denied by Schlösser. This time, however, Hilpert persevered, and Engel was hired, although to avoid controversy his productions consisted almost exclusively of classic pieces.

Why did Goebbels allow these challenges? Again, he privileged artistic merit over political ideology. Time and again Goebbels made concessions to Hilpert: he

---

[34] Michael Dillmann, *Heinz Hilpert: Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1990), 11.

[35] Reprinted in Dillman, 112.

was allowed to hire Caspar Neher, another friend and colleague of Brecht, and Ernst Schütte, a stage designer who refused to divorce his Jewish wife (although they were separated). Goebbels even allowed Hilpert to visit his Jewish mistress Annelies Heuser, whom he had concealed in the Deutsches Theater and smuggled across the Swiss border, in Zurich on a regular basis.[36] Goebbels's willingness to look the other way when it came to politically questionable behavior simply mirrored Göring's treatment of Gustaf Gründgens at the Berliner Staatstheater. If Goebbels was to keep up with the artistic achievements of the Schauspielhaus, he had to keep Hilpert as Intendant, and that meant turning a blind eye. For Goebbels, at least at the Deutsches Theater, upholding a vision of a new Reich theatre came to mean upholding the great artistic traditions of German culture. As John Rouse perceptively stated, Nazi culture "proposed itself as the legitimate heir of the national culture," and the objective of Goebbels and Göring was "to preserve the grand style of the grand culture."[37] That preservation, and the placement of Nazi theatre within a grand tradition of a German national theatre, took precedence over finding a way to stage a "heroic," "unsentimental," "steely romantic" German theatre. One platform of Nazi theatrical policy was simply overlooked—although in matters of play selection, Hilpert bowed to the restrictions of the Dramaturg of the Reich, as did every other Intendant in Germany.

Schlösser, an ideologue who was not so quick to overlook transgressions against Nazi theatrical policy, often complained that Hilpert was not staging more

---

[36] Grange, 81.

[37] John Rouse, *Brecht and the West German Theatre: The Practice and Politics of Interpretation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1989), 20.

pieces by favorable playwrights such as Richard Billinger, Hans Rehberg and Eberhard Möller. And the Ministry did have some leverage in negotiations with Hilpert. Since the Ministry held the lease on the Deutsches Theatre, Hilpert was obligated to remain in contact with them regarding the theatre's finances. As Alan Steinweis points out, this fact was enough to "force political concessions" from Hilpert.[38] But while Hilpert did occasionally acquiesce and produce plays by Nazi-endorsed playwrights, the repertoire of the Deutsches Theater under his direction consisted mostly of German classics, Shakespeare and other acceptable foreign classic playwrights. But if Hilpert did not strive to consciously stage a representation of the new German *Volk*, *was* a national identity expressed on the Deutsches Theater stage nevertheless? In my discussion of several productions at the Deutsches Theater from 1934 to 1944, I will argue that producing a play in a theatre that is run by the Nazi government, that flies the swastika flag, can be interpreted as an endorsement of that government, despite Hilpert's attempts to remain a-political. Regardless of intention, the Deutsches Theater was used to legitimize the regime, a move that was not altogether unsuccessful.

Hilpert's first production at the Deutsches Theater was Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. The choice was not a daring one—Shakespearean comedies were incredibly popular in the Third Reich, and as I discussed in the previous chapter, staging a Shakespearean play had become a patriotic choice after the Nazi appropriation of Shakespeare as a "Nordic" playwright. There was great excitement about the new

[38] Alan E. Steinweis, "Cultural Eugenics: Social Policy, Economic Reform, and the Purge of Jews from German Cultural Life," *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, ed. Glenn R. Cuomo (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 78.

beginning of the Deutsches Theater. Critic Herbert Pfeiffer noted that cars pushed and squeezed into the Karlstraße as a "river of visitors" came to the theatre.[39] The production would set the tone of Hilpert's early Shakespearean comedies at the Deutsches Theater, characterized by Wilhelm Hortmann as possessing a "weightless ease, rhythm and flow."[40]

The main stylistic decision made by Hilpert was to set the play in the eighteenth century. The actors wore period costumes, the ducal brothers and Jaques wore powdered wigs, the incidental music was Mozart, and the court sets had a classical symmetry. Ludwig Sternaux remarks that Hilpert had presented the "old, lovely, fairy tale play in a newer, romantically daring vein," framed by Mozart's music. Sternaux comments "Shakespeare in Rococo costume…a saucy venture!" He goes on to say that unlike other directors who have tried to force the play into something different, Hilpert simply finds the Rococo spirit already present in the play, and that "the grace of the language and the fable now correspond convincingly to the grace of the scenery and the costumes."[41] Carl Weichardt, writing for the *Berliner Morgenpost*, comments that while this transposition would not work for all Shakespeare plays, it works here, in a comedy "overshadowed by quiet melancholy, done without crude antics." Weichardt goes on to write that the production became, under Hilpert's direction, "a fine prelude for the cultural mission of the new

---

[39] Herbert Pfeiffer, "Hilpert eröffnet das Deutsches Theater 'Wie es Euch gefällt,'" Sept. 12, 1934, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[40] Wilhelm Hortmann, *Shakespeare on the German Stage. The Twentieth Century.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 123.

[41] Ludwig Sternaux, "Shakespeare in Rokoko-Kostüm. Deutsches Theater: 'Wie es euch gefällt,'" Sept. 1934, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

Deutsches Theater, [which is] . . . maintaining Germany's artistic legitimacy in the life of the theatre."[42] Herbert Ihering, however, had trepidations about the Rococo setting, writing that it "changes and at last nearly abandons the character of the comedy."[43] But the artistic choice was widely applauded; even Ihering wrote that Hilpert had initiative and artistic "courage of his convictions." In Hilpert's Rococo world, the play became a harmonious discourse on the nature of love.

The set design echoed the romantic feeling of the production. The Forest of Arden had a dark-green hue, and was full of "natural sumptuousness,"[44] with thick beech trees with "virgin trunks."[45] The sky in the "fairy tale forest" sparkled with stars.[46] With the exception of Herbert Ihering, who felt that the forest sets were not always in good taste, the reviews all remark on the beauty of the scenery. The sets assisted in the creation of a romantic, fairy-tale feeling.

The play centers around the character of Rosalinde, here played by Angela Salloker, a newcomer from Munich. Most reviews of her performance were very positive. Sternaux calls her completely charming, banishing all memories of previous Rosalindes. He praises her nuance in both language and movement. Weichardt writes "she can be a gentle little lamb and in the next instant assume a more dry tone,

---

[42] Carl Weichardt, "Das neue Deutsche Theater. Eröffnungs-Vorstellung: 'Wie es euch gefällt,'" *Berliner Morgenpost*, Sept. 1934, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Arhiv, Akademie der Künste.

[43] Herbert Ihering, "Wieder Deutsches Theater. Eroffnung mit 'Wie es Euch gefällt'," *Berliner Tageblatt*, Sept. 12, 1934, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[44] P.W., "Hilpert spielt 'Wie es Euch gefällt.' Erster Abend der neuer Direktion im Deutschen Theater," *B.Z. am Mittag*, Sept. 12, 1934, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[45] Pfeiffer, "Hilpert eröffnet das Deutsches Theater 'Wie es Euch gefällt.' "

[46] Weichardt, "Das neue Deutsche Theater. Eröffnungs-Vorstellung: 'Wie es euch gefällt.'"

a nearly hard sauciness. In all her youth she is a finished (hopefully not too finished) artist."[47] Ihering thought that she could only be loud or quiet, hard or soft, but that she had a playful mood and promising future. Salloker's Rosalind was an embodiment of positive female qualities: lovely, smart, playful and loyal to those she loves.

The clown Touchstone was dressed in an unusual way, all in white, like a Pierrot. But despite the striking costume (mentioned by all of the reviews), there was nothing unusual or unexpected in the performance of the role. Max Gülstorff received very positive reviews in his portrayal of the clown, whose "sparkling jokes" exploded like "fireworks."[48] Weichardt writes that Gülstorff "strews jokes and truths...like pearls of Mozart's rhythms," and that he is possessed of the "finest stage humor." Ihering praises his "funny and nimble drollery."

Jaques, as I mentioned earlier, was dressed like a Rococo-courtier, complete with powdered wig. Theodor Loos's performance was widely acclaimed, called a "complete acting achievement" by Weichardt. Ihering wrote extensively about Loos's performance as excellent, but out of step with the tone of the rest of the play. He writes that this misanthropic Jaques would be at home in a Molière play, and that unlike every other character in this production, his *Weltschmerz* remains "passionately, deeply," even as the comedy of the play tries to banish it. Ihering comments that the role requires a different diction, a "counterweight to the lighter persons of the piece." Despite Hilpert's attempt to create a buoyant world of

[47] Ibid.

[48] Pfeiffer.

lightness and ease where all darkness is banished, the melancholy Jaques cannot be completely subdued into this mold.

What is striking about the tone of the reviews is the level of excitement for this new chapter of the Deutsches Theater. P.W. writes that "The Deutsches Theater again has a future." Pfeiffer compares Hilpert to a magician with a magic wand who will revive the nearly-sunk theatre. He concludes his review with the comment that Hilpert's employment "again creates yardsticks" by which other productions must be judged. The applause at the end of the evening was especially fervent, bringing Hilpert out for curtain call after curtain call. Weichardt remarks that the viewer was reassured that "the fate of the famous Deutsches Theater again rests in good hands." It is Ihering who offers the most thoughtful analysis of the situation. Although he personally disagreed with many of Hilpert's choices in the production, he welcomed the theatrical evening that provoked enthusiasm and arguments, and congratulated Hilpert for the courage of his convictions. He pointed out Hilpert's courage in working with new, unknown actors, an unusual practice in the large theatres of Berlin, and expressed his belief in Hilpert's momentum. Under this new direction, "the Deutsches Theater began again."

This overwhelming chorus of approval validated Goebbels's decision to replace Achaz with Hilpert. The change in tone of the reviews is striking, and the excitement over the performance seems genuine and not propagandistic. Some political factors are expressed in the reviews: Goebbels's presence is mentioned in some of the reviews, and Weichardt mentions that thanks are owed to the Reich as well as to Hilpert. Pfeiffer writes that this idyllic world, where melancholy becomes

bearable, where shepherds and farm girls achieve noble emotions, and Duke Frederick enters a monastery after a religious epiphany, are very topical. He doesn't go into detail, but the implication is that the new Germany will be like that idyllic world. The other reviews that tried to tie the production into modern events proclaimed that the German theatre was stronger because there was once more a strong, artistic director at the hallowed Deutsches Theater. The *Völkischer Beobachter* tried to make the performance into a political statement, commenting that Orlando represented "noble races," like the Germans, "who through genetic predisposition can overcome oppression," [49] but critic Heinrich Grube was generally dismissive and unenthusiastic about the production, perhaps because despite his attempts he could not manipulate the production into the *völkisch* statement he so desperately wanted.

The only overt political statement was to be found in the program. A note in the program stated that the production was a "cultural representation" to be granted "a special place in the Reich," and that the Deutsches Theater had the "confirmation and support of the Reich."[50] The note signals Goebbels's intention to use the prestige of the theatre itself as a propaganda tool and a legitimization of German, and therefore, Nazi culture. In spite of Hilpert's intentions, he could not completely divorce his production from the political realities of the time and the circumstances in which he was working.

The action on the stage, however, did not support a *völkisch* interpretation.

---

[49] Quoted in Dillman, 330.

[50] Program notes, *Wie es Euch gefällt,* Deutsches Theater Archive.

This was a straightforward interpretation of an idyllic Shakespearean comedy, with no attempt to make any commentary about contemporary life. The production wasn't hostile to the Reich, but neither was it supportive of Nazi ideology. This would be the general tone of Hilpert's productions at the Deutsches Theater.

Occasionally, Hilpert would bow to the pressure from the Ministry and present a more contemporary German play by a Nazi-favored playwright. The 1936 production of *Der tolle Christian* was such an example. The play, written by World War I veteran Theodor Haerten, premiered in Darmstadt in the spring of 1935. The Deutsches Theater production served as the Berlin premiere of the piece, a production whose time was overdue, according to one reviewer.[51] However the reviews that I encountered suggest that the production, directed by Ernst Karchow, was not a successful one.

The hero of the play, which takes place during the Thirty Years War, is Duke Christian von Braunschweig. Christian is in love with Elizabeth, wife of the "winter king," Prince Elect Friedrich V. of the Palatinate. He undertakes a last "desperate" battle to help the Bohemian "winter king" reclaim his throne and dies. It is the lens through which Haerten tells the story that critic Erwin Rainalter finds lacking. In his review, he writes "This Christian was the carrier of an idea. He lived and fought during a time in Germany filled with many mistakes. Haerten's play does not always show this enormous background." For Rainalter, the play ultimately fails because its focus is on the private sphere, not the public, communal one. Within this context,

[51] "Gottes Freund und der Pfaffen Feind. 'Der tolle Christian' gelangt heute im Deutschen Theater zur Aufführung," no date, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

despite dialogue that talks of German superiority and the need for a strong Germany, the play does not capitalize on the *völkisch* possibility within the story itself. Its focus on love, rather than on the historical experience of the German people, damages the play.

This situation is further compounded by the character of Christian himself. Rainalter calls Raimund Bucher's Christian heroic, but B.E. Werner disagrees with this assessment. Werner complains that despite the lively color of the camp scenes (which Haerten himself would have experienced during the war), "The hero Christian remains pale…despite his exaggeration of emotion." Christian is "a young man moved back and forth by fate. …a passive, suffering role."[52] That description does not fit the stereotype of the *völkisch*, heroic leader popularized in Nazi ideology.

Questions of fate troubled the production as a whole, according to Werner. He writes:

> Presumably he [Haerten] wanted to show the fury of war and the force of fate, which encircles man and his foolish passions. But he did not carry this theme through to the end, and so … the philosophy of fate leads to no result. …the spectator, who waited from act to act and repeatedly strained for the mysterious solution, finally asks himself at the end, a little disappointedly, what the author. . . actually wanted to say.[53]

It is clear that Werner finds something lacking in the playwriting. Certainly, according to this description, it is lacking as a National Socialist portrayal of a historical moment. Passivity is not a National Socialist character trait. But Werner's concerns seem to go beyond merely the ideological failings of the piece. He also

---

[52] B.E. Werner, "Theodor Haerten: 'Der tolle Christian' Deutsches Theater," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 27, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[53] Ibid.

finds the character of Elizabeth, the winter queen, lacking in depth, and notes that in general that the smaller roles were lacking in quality. He blames this on Haerten's immaturity as a writer, but remarks on the playwright's potential, commenting that he brought passion and courageous originality to the play, with brief moments of poetic electricity between characters.[54]

According to one review, the piece did have some power. The reviewer acknowledges the flaws in the piece, but insists that "nevertheless, one is struck again and again under its spell," aware that "a poet and a man of the theatre speaks to us."[55] But this critic clearly has a Nazi bias; the remainder of the article contains sections of dialogue from the play that center on the struggle for a German national identity, not the private love story that, according to Erwin Rainalter, rendered the evening unsatisfying. The audience, according to the reviews, applauded the piece, but according to Werner there was some hesitation before the "friendly applause."[56] I do not think that this hesitation reflects a strong Nazi sentiment within the audience itself. After more than a year of Hilpert's leadership, Deutsches Theater audiences had simply become accustomed to a higher quality of playwriting than Theodor Haerten could offer. The production did not seem to be an overwhelming success on an artistic level, nor was it political enough to be a success as a National Socialist propaganda piece.

The mixed reception of this production serves as a validation of Hilpert's

---

[54] Ibid.

[55] "Gottes Freund und der Pfaffen Feind. 'Der tolle Christian' gelangt heute im Deutschen Theater zur Aufführung."

[56] Werner, "Theodor Haerten: 'Der tolle Christian' Deutsches Theater."

choices when planning the theatre's repertoire: classic plays which have stood the test of time, sprinkled with a few modern pieces. But Hilpert's repertoire preferences became more favorable politically as the consolidation phase of National Socialism began and overt propaganda plays became unfashionable. The theatre no longer had to act as a conduit to unite the *Volk* because the people were already united behind their *Führer*. But the theatre still bore a responsibility to consolidate and maintain that support.[57] As the criteria for acceptable plays shifted, Goebbels altered the way he used the theatre for propaganda purposes. Goebbels could point to the classics-driven repertoire of the Deutsches Theater as upholding the grand tradition of German theatre, thereby supporting German culture and Germany itself in this next phase of the Third Reich, regardless of Hilpert's intentions in selecting that repertoire.

There were problems in the relationship between Hilpert and Goebbels, even if Goebbels was pleased with the new artistic quality being achieved at the Deutsches Theater. In his diary, Goebbels wrote that Hilpert has "become somewhat problematic… [He] Has no contact with the regime." He approved of the theatre's repertoire, announcing that it was not too literary and had "the right relationship to the new regime," but he accused Hilpert of isolating himself and creating a theatre of aesthetes.[58] This was undoubtedly true. Hilpert was not interested in a close personal relationship with Goebbels or his Ministry, and maintained as little contact with Nazi bureaucracy as he could, given his title as Intendant. Hilpert was not a committed

[57] For more information on the shift to the consolidation phase within Nazi Germany, see Chapter One.

[58] Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: sämtliche Fragmente,* Teil I: *Aufzeichnungen 1924-1941*, II, 468.

Nazi, and his first commitment was to producing good theatre, not to the regime. And as long as he continued to do so, Goebbels seemed willing to let other transgressions slide.

Hilpert's production of Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans* was more indicative of the usual Deutsches Theater production—a classic, this time by a great German playwright. The play follows historical events rather closely until the final act. There, Schiller's Johanna becomes infatuated with an English officer, loses her divine powers, atones for her sin, escapes from prison, and returns to the battlefield where she dies. Critic Erich Naujoks wrote that the basic reason for performing *Jungfrau von Orleans* was the "language of Schiller." For Naujoks, the production's goal should simply be to serve the text. He states "The heavy task of the actor lies in the fulfillment of this word, the high art of the director lies in the successful modification of Schiller's polyphonic language into a . . . pure sounding melody."[59] The general consensus among the reviews was that Hilpert was more than up to the task.

Anton Dietzenschmidt was enraptured by the production. He writes that Hilpert "plays Schiller as if he were a brand new modern poet—and the scenes appear in a completely new light." He further explains, "Heinz Hilpert takes Schiller's verses, unfurls them, [and] lights them up with the penetrating beam of a searchlight."[60] The reviews suggest that Hilpert's production is not merely a harmonious veneration of the piece, but rather an energetic, emotional production

---

[59] Erich Naujoks, "Die lächelnde Jungfrau. Luise Ullrich als 'Jungfrau von Orleans' Deutsches Theater," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, Jan. 5, 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[60] A.F. Dietzenschmidt, "Klassische Tragödie und moderne Komödie im Deutschen Theater und in der Komischen Oper," *Berliner Tageblatt*, Jan. 26, 1937, n.p.; Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

with moments of irony and humor. While Otto Ernst Hesse found this a bit too jarring, wondering if Schiller's work "would be better served if set completely to the emotion, the romance, and the poetic truth from which the poet conceived it,"[61] the reviews generally praised the production.

Luise Ullrich's portrayal of Johanna was very well received. She approached the role of the virgin in a different light, moved not by "the mystical strength of faith, but by the mysterious magic of enchantment." There is no implication that Johanna is the evil witch characterized by Shakespeare or Voltaire's harlot in *La Pucelle*; rather, this Johanna has a human charm that "announces itself. . . in a nearly impish superior smile."[62] Erik Krünes also remarks on the human nature of Johanna, writing that her "heavenly and holy visions remain nevertheless grounded on the soil of terrestrial naturalness."[63] Dietzenschmidt calls Ullrich's Johanna "tender. . . boyish, virginal, burning out in enthusiasm," graceful "in attitude and motion . . . thought out and inspired in expression and language." In his opinion, the other characters are simply an accompaniment to the "beauty of Johanna."[64]

I find it interesting that in humanizing Johanna and giving her an earthly quality, Hilpert's production creates a heroine that is virginal and beautiful without

---

[61] Otto Ernst Hesse, "Luise Ullirch in der Schiller-Tragödie Deutsches Theater," *B.Z. am Mittag*, Jan. 26, 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[62] Naujoks, "Die lächelnde Jungfrau. Luise Ullrich als 'Jungfrau von Orleans' Deutsches Theater."

[63] Erik Krünes, "Im Deutschen Theater Luise Ullrich als 'Jungfrau' Schillers romantische Tragödie, neueinstudiert von Heinz Hilpert," *Nachtausgabe*, Jan. 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[64] Dietzenschmidt, "Klassische Tragödie und moderne Komödie im Deutschen Theater und in der Komischen Oper."

being overtly religious. Given Hilpert's belief in the humanizing and universalistic quality of art, the choice is not a surprising one.[65] But it also, coincidentally, reflects the National Socialist practice of removing religious icons and replacing them with icons of the state.

The production also looked beautiful. The costumes for the coronation scene were rich and deeply colored in tones of crimson and trimmed with ermine. Ernst Schütte's design consisted of colorful, "fairy-tale, beautiful" sceneries, changing the depth and width of the stage space for the scenes on a barricade or a hill.[66] The highlight of the design was the beautiful gothic gate of the Reims cathedral. Naujoks commented that the production presented a visual celebration of the Schiller's work, providing a sumptuous feast for the eyes.[67]

The audience reaction was enthusiastic. Dietzenschmidt described the reaction as "jubilant," and even Otto Ernst Hesse, who questions Hilpert's handling of the play, writes that the public is "gladly taken prisoner by Schiller's work."[68] And how was it viewed by the political regime? Goebbels attended the premiere—a fact mentioned by each of the reviews I located—and praised it in his diary. One could create a *völkisch* interpretation from the play's underlying conflict between duty to one's mission and people and the inclination of private desire. This description

---

[65] Wilhelm Hortmann discusses Hilpert's humanistic aesthetic at length in *Shakespeare on the German Stage. The Twentieth Century*, as does Hilpert himself in his collection of speeches and essays, *Formen des Theaters. Reden und Aufsätze* (Vienna: Alfred Ibach Verlag,1943). This idea will be explored in more depth later in this chapter.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Naujoks, "Die lächelnde Jungfrau. Luise Ullrich als 'Jungfrau von Orleans' Deutsches Theater."

[68] Hesse, "Luise Ullirch in der Schiller-Tragödie Deutsches Theater."

certainly fits the model of a Nazi hero: a strong leader, committed to her people, who ultimately chooses her role as leader and warrior over personal desire (even if a female leader was far from the norm in National Socialist ideology). Yet there is hardly any mention of this political parallel in the reviews. Erik Krünes writes that Schiller's virgin is understood "today as an envoy of a good God" whose miracles saved "a whole people from emergency and despair," and remarks that in this play the "*Führer* idea" receives dramatic expression.[69] But that is the extent of the political nature of the reviews. It is quite possible that because of Johanna's femininity, and the Nazi gender stereotype that placed a woman's role securely in the private, rather than the public, sphere, too direct a connection between Johanna's leadership and the leadership of Nazi Germany would be frowned upon. The parallel may be inferred, but only Krünes makes the overt comparison.

There is no indication or evidence that Hilpert intended to make any commentary on the current political climate with his production. Plays with strong, heroic figures share a common theme with Nazi mythology, namely a strong protagonist who attempts to change the course of history for their people. It is for that reason that history plays were so attractive to National Socialist cultural ideology, especially when their own vision of "steely heroicism" never materialized. That does not mean, of course, that every play with this characteristic staged in Nazi Germany was meant as a endorsement of the current regime. In fact, a year earlier Hilpert had pleaded that a theatre of "serene and humane grace" be allowed to coexist

[69] Krünes, "Im Deutschen Theater Luise Ullrich als 'Jungfrau' Schillers romantische Tragödie, neueinstudiert von Heinz Hilpert."

with the heroic style espoused by Nazi ideologists.[70] But those plays did leave themselves open for Nazi appropriation, something that was beyond the control of the director if the production did not openly challenge Nazi ideology or policy (and such a challenge was extremely rare). In the case of *Jungfrau von Orleans*, however, this appropriation had less to do with the play's context, and more with its pedigree. Yes, there were moments that could be read as a staging of the *Volk*. But the staging of a national identity found in Hilpert's production was more subtle than the original intentions of early Nazi cultural policy. The staging of a high quality performance of a German classic by one of the most lauded German playwrights was what made this production valuable for Goebbels and his Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. It further cemented an image of the Third Reich as the protector and progenitor of a true German culture handed down through the centuries. Goebbels's presence at the Deutsches Theater served as a reminder that this was a Nazi theatre, even if the *völkisch* quality of the repertoire was lacking in the eyes of more conservative Party members. Hilpert was simply trying to produce theatre of the highest quality, removed from the political happenings offstage. Yet that task, in hindsight, seems impossible in a theatre under the explicit control of the Minister of Propaganda. Regardless, it is a path that Hilpert would continue to take, both in the build-up to war and during the war itself.

As was illustrated in the previous chapter, there were far more Shakespearean comedies performed in Nazi Germany than tragedies or histories, and that was certainly the case at the Theater des Volkes. The Deutsches Theater, however,

[70] Hilpert, *Formen des Theaters. Reden und Aufsätze*, 13.

included these lesser performed plays in their repertoire, as did the Berliner Staatstheater, as I shall discuss in the next chapter. One such example was the Erich Engel directed production of *Coriolanus*, which premiered in March 1937. Engel had famously directed the play in 1925 as epic theatre, complete with a populace of grey proletarians.[71] His second production, not surprisingly, was markedly different. Engel's productions at the Deutsches Theater during the Third Reich were famous for their clarity and objectivity, as well as a lack of sentimentality or lyrical embellishments (not surprising in a former colleague of Brecht), and these characteristics were present in his *Coriolanus* as well.[72]

Critic B.E. Werner observes that Engel removed the "idealistic stand" out of the piece, presenting a three hour production.[73] Joachim Klaiber writes that Engel and Caspar Neher, the scene designer, "set the scenes between antiquity and present and fill this classical author with so much scenic fantasy … that they develop one of the strongest impressions of this season."[74] Florian Kienzl's praise of Engel is effusive, and he writes "With the very intelligent direction of Erich Engel, which makes the tragic development simple and clearly visible…[and] which occasionally places [the] topic in humoristic twilight, we experience an exemplary conception of

---

[71] Hortmann, 149.

[72] Herbert Ihering, *Regie*. (Berlin: Hugo, 1943), 55.

[73] B.E. Werner, "Shakespeares Volksfeind. 'Coriolan'—Deutsches Theater," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 26, 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[74] Joachim Klaiber, "Politischer Shakespeare. 'Coriolan' im Deutschen Theater—Titelrolle: Ewald Balser," *Der Angriff*, March 27, 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Erich Engel Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

Shakespeare."[75] Erik Krünes agrees, remarking that Engel gave the work new life with his cuts and "theatrical cross fades."[76] This clarity and focus was strengthened by Caspar Neher's scene design. The simple foreground consisted of "column stumps and remains of buildings," which Werner comments "fits the period of crisis in which the drama is set better than glossy temples and palaces."[77] Engel and Neher made use of vertical space, filling the area with "columns and walls, gates and seats, so that events often developed upwards."[78]

The revolving stage was used effectively to stage twenty one scenes with relative speed, and the use of projections to suggest different scenes also aided in the flow of the scene changes. The extant production photographs show that the costumes were fairly conventional, consisting of flowing Roman togas. The collaboration of Engel and Neher contributed to a concise (relatively), focused production that became a showcase for Ewald Balser as Coriolanus.

According to Wilhelm Hortmann, Engel in his production tried to avoid an undue heroicizing of Coriolanus.[79] This attempt was successful for Werner, who writes that "despite his absolute heart, Coriolan is not a free hero. He lives and acts, bound by his antipathy against the masses; [he] insults the suffering people, betrays

---

[75] Florian Kienzl, "Shakespeares Volksfeind/ 'Coriolan' im Deutschen Theater," *12 Uhr Blatt*, March 30, 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Erich Engel Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[76] Erik Krünes, "Der Mann, der siegen und sterben mußte. Shakespeares 'Coriolan,' neu inszeniert und bearbeitet von Erich Engel—In der Titelrolle Ewald Balser," March 27, 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Erich Engel Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[77] Werner, "Shakespeares Volksfeind. 'Coriolan'—Deutsches Theater."

[78] Paul Fechter, "Shakespeares 'Coriolan'/Neueinstudierung im Deutsches Theater," March 27, 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Erich Engel Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[79] Hortmann, 149.

his friends, and is drawn with perceptible distance by Shakespeare."[80] Yet he remains a hero, albeit a complicated one. And unsurprisingly, the play's success was largely attributed to the performance of Balser as Coriolanus. Werner writes that he "gave the force of his safe, strong features and the clear depth of his voice to Coriolan," thereby controlling the scenes in which he performed,[81] while Joachim Klaiber comments on Balser's "strength and combative attitude."[82] Felix Dargel describes Balser's "stately figure, which towers outwardly above the majority…," with "unrestrained pride and high courage" that allow him to stand "against the cowardice and venality of the plebeians."[83] For Günter Mann, Balser was "the intellectual center of the performance." He writes that Balser is "spontaneously brilliant" in the scene in the outer forum of Rome, when he becomes the enemy of his native country "because it is impossible for him to lie and beautifully flatter the masses, whom he despises."[84] Franz Köppen carefully considers Coriolanus's treasonous behavior. Of the masses' treatment of the scornful Coriolanus, he asks "Can the masses react differently to him than they reacted?" Köppen blames Coriolanus's behavior on his internal detachment from the strong roots of his native country. Balser's Coriolanus proves that a leader who "ignores the forces of his own nationality" and believes in the

---

[80] Werner.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Klaiber, "Politischer Shakespeare. 'Coriolan' im Deutschen Theater—Titelrolle: Ewald Balser."

[83] Felix A. Dargel, "Der Beste soll herrschen! 'Coriolan' im Deutschen Theater," March 26, 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Erich Engel Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[84] Günter Mann, "Shakespeare im Deutschen Theater. Ewald Balser als 'Coriolan,' no date, n.p.; clipping file, Erich Engel Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

"autocracy of the individualistic principle" cannot "stabilize [the people]."[85] But he also writes that the low instincts of the Tribune make Coriolanus's disdain of the people understandable. Paul Fechter comments that Balser almost has too much warmth for Coriolanus's military restraint, and that his performance was strongest "when his humanity could break through the rigid attitude," such as in the scene with Volumnia in the tent.[86]

The reviews show that Balser was an indisputable success. But they also show the complicated nature of Coriolanus himself, and several of the reviews struggle to pigeon-hole the hero, or at least spend a great deal of time discussing his motivations and his character, trying to make his behavior understandable to their readers. He comes across as an anti-hero, who should have been the one to lead his people, but ultimately could not.

It is through this discussion of Coriolanus and his betrayal of Rome that the political nature of the play, and any references to the present political situation, are discussed. Two of the reviews I consulted use the term "political Shakespeare" in the their titles. The play was read by many reviewers in the context of more recent political events, specifically the Weimar Republic. B.E. Werner writes "More clearly still [the play] speaks to our time, in which we experienced the questionable nature of democracy," equating the Tribunes of the Senate with the elected government of the Weimar Republic.[87] Felix Dargel echoes this interpretation, writing:

---

[85] Franz Köppen, "Shakespeares 'Coriolan' im Deutschen Theater," no date, n.p.; clipping file, Erich Engel Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[86] Fechter, "Shakespeares 'Coriolan'/Neueinstudierung im Deutsches Theater."

[87] Werner, "Shakespeares Volksfeind. 'Coriolan'—Deutsches Theater."

> The formless mass, uncertainly wavering at the hands of the narrow-minded and short-sighted Tribune, these vain representatives of the people—it is indeed not so long ago that we experienced all this. Thus the tragic play acquires an increased resonance, and often the applause rings out in the middle of the moving scenes.[88]

If the political dynamic of the play is compared to the despised Weimar Republic, then Coriolanus's behavior becomes far more understandable from a *völkisch* point of view. The people, and Coriolanus himself, are betrayed by the duplicitous Tribune members who turn the people against Coriolanus. Yes, both Coriolanus and the people bear some responsibility for their actions—Coriolanus for his pride and inherent disdain of the masses, the people for their willingness to be swayed by Brutus and Sicinius—but the blame ultimately lies with the Tribune itself. In this context, an inherently un-*völkisch* act, treason, instead becomes an indictment of the dangers of parliamentary democracy. Even Franz Köppen, who does not see this as a political play, attributes Coriolanus's downfall to a *völkisch*, and therefore somewhat political, reason: Coriolanus remains detached from his people, to whom he truly belongs. It is this detachment from the *Volk* that directly leads to his destruction.

The reviews for this production make more contemporary references than the reviews for *Jungfrau von Orleans*. Does that mean that this production did stage an image of the *Volk* as imagined by Nazi cultural policy? Given Engel's directorial history and his past collaboration and friendship with Bertolt Brecht, I would argue that if a National Socialist image of the German hero was staged, it was not an intentional decision by Engel. Engel strove to show a fully realized, human portrayal of a man in conflict, not a glorification of a two-dimensional war hero. But, as in the

[88] Dargel, "Der Beste soll herrschen! 'Coriolan' im Deutschen Theater."

case of *Jungfrau von Orleans*, the play's plot could lend itself to a National Socialist reading if one was looking for it. Engel's production was thoughtful and driven by character-motivated decisions, but although it subtly challenged an obviously Nazi reading in its refusal to canonize Coriolanus, it did not overtly challenge the regime or its values. Without this type of overt subversion, the production left itself open to appropriation by Nazi critics.

With the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 and the subsequent beginning of World War II, German society underwent yet another shift. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the beginning of the war had a noticeable effect on the repertoire of the Theater des Volkes, as grand productions of classical works were supplanted by lighthearted operettas and reviews, the ultimate escape from the world outside the theatre. But the repertoire shift at the Deutsches Theater was not so noticeable and severe. Comedies remained popular, but tragedy did not disappear from the Deutsches Theater stage. When Hebbel's *Agnes Bernauer* was staged in 1940, Bruno Werner explicitly pointed out that the production disproved the opinion that "the war demands only easy maintenance."[89] Throughout the war, Hilpert continued to offer a thoughtful, varied repertoire, refusing to completely abandon serious fare in the wake of current events.

This philosophy extended beyond the fully staged productions at the Deutsches Theater. Just two months after the start of the war, Hilpert instituted the *Morgenfeiern* (morning celebrations). The morning celebrations took place on Sunday mornings. The general format was chamber music, followed by readings by

[89] Bruno E. Werner, "Agnes Bernauer," October 18, 1940, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

of poetry or drama, and then more chamber music. These readings, and Hilpert's dedication to them, reflect Hilpert's love of the literary text itself. They reflected his own habit of reading and meditating in his free time.[90]

Hilpert's dedication to language and poetry fulfilled the audience on more than a purely entertaining level. According to scholar Helmuth Waldner, the public was able to escape the dense, often meaningless language of Nazi jargon, "taste" the words, and once again possess the essence of German consciousness. For Hilpert, that essence *was* the poetry of great German writers. Waldner writes that "the words of the poets become a caution against the dogma of the Third Reich."[91] Waldner clearly sees the morning celebrations as Hilpert's personal resistance to National Socialist rhetoric. Kurt Seeger agrees with Waldner's assessment. He writes that Hilpert fought against the destruction of the German language by Nazi jargon with the cleansing words of German classical and Romantic authors.[92]

These comments were written after the war, so it is hard to know how many audience members felt that they were participating in a reclaiming of German language and consciousness. But scholar Siegfried Melchinger supports these comments with his own recollection of attending the morning celebrations, saying "I only know that one appeared there on Sunday at 11 o'clock time and again to hear something against the Nazis." In a conversation between Melchinger and Hilpert in 1960, Hilpert recalled an incident where a Hebbel recitation was taken as a statement

---

[90] Dillman, 157.

[91] Quoted in Ibid.

[92] Quoted in Ibid.

against the regime. Actor Ewald Balser approached Hilpert and said that he thought the whole theatre would be arrested. When Hilpert was challenged by a Nazi official, Hilpert responded "That is Hebbel!" Hilpert was warned to omit the offensive material or face consequences from the regime, but as Hilpert told Melchinger, "I did not omit it—also they did not proceed against me."[93] Yet again, Hilpert's usefulness to Goebbels and the Ministry superseded an adherence to Nazi ideology and policy. As long as Hilpert kept mounting high-quality, well-attended productions, Goebbels and his colleagues at the Ministry ignored Hilpert's indiscretions.

The morning celebrations were not stopped by Goebbels; in fact, they continued until August, 1944, just weeks before the theatres in Berlin were closed as part of the "total war effort." These Sunday morning celebrations were a continuation of Hilpert's humanistic view of the theatre and his belief that the simple act of listening to poetry and drama could have a transformative effect on the lives of the audience. In times of growing seriousness and escalating war, Hilpert did not abandon serious, thoughtful work. On the contrary, he turned to it to try and infuse everyday life with meaning. The decision to continue in the face of political opposition, even quiet opposition, reflects Hilpert's commitment to art over Nazi policy.

The morning celebrations were not Hilpert's only attempt at subtle resistance to Nazi dogma and policy. He responded to the Battle of Britain in the summer and autumn of 1940 by submitting a repertoire schedule with three Shakespearean plays.[94]

---

[93] Quoted in Ibid., 159.

[94] Gerwin Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage. German Theatre and Society, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 192.

A program for a Gerhard Hauptmann play predicted that Hauptmann's work would still "glow when we have long since turned to dust," a scandalous statement in light of the promised thousand-year Reich. The confiscation of the programs was ordered by the Nazis.[95] Hilpert's resistance was subtle enough to keep him out of trouble, as long as it could be attributed to a dedication to German art.

In 1941, Hilpert presented a production of Hanns Johst's *Der Einsame* (The Lonely One). At first glance, this play appears to be a departure for the director. Johst, a veteran of World War I who had studied medicine and philosophy, was a committed member of the Nazi party. Hitler had seen and enjoyed the 1920 Dresden premiere of Johst's play *Der König*.[96] His play *Thomas Paine* (1927) about the American Revolutionary war hero was hailed by critic Hermann Wanderscheck as "the first political drama of the New Germany."[97] This combination of Johst's assosciation with the National Socialist party and his friendship with Hitler made Johst the premiere Nazi playwright. In 1933, Goebbels appointed Johst as the dramaturg at the Berliner Staatstheater. According to Elisabeth Schulz Hostetter, one of his primary responsibilities was to function as Goebbels's eyes in the rival theatre. He regularly wore a black SS uniform to work.[98] Johst resigned his position as dramaturg after a dispute over the staging of one of his plays and in 1935 was

---

[95] Ibid.

[96] Günther Rühle, ed., *Zeit und Theater Diktatur und Exil: 1933-1945* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1974), 729.

[97] Hermann Wanderscheck, *Deutsche Dramatik der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Bong Verlag, 1938), 93.

[98] Elisabeth Schulz Hostetter, *The Berlin State Theater Under the Nazi Regime: A Study of the Administration, Key Productions, and Critical Responses from 1933-1944* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 47.

promoted to the office of President of the Literary Chamber.[99] He was, quite simply, the most famous Nazi playwright, although his more propagandistic history plays fell out of favor with the shift from the early gathering phase of Nazi Germany to the more artistically conservative (from a playwriting stance, at least) consolidating phase.

But this play was subtly different from Johst's more famous historical plays such as *Thomas Paine* and *Schlageter*. Those plays follow a more typical Nazi format, focusing on a hardworking hero who leads a revolution to defend the *Volk,* often losing his life in the process. *Der Einsame* was written in 1917, early in Johst's career. Stylistically, the play was a work of "expressionistic ecstasy,"[100] similar to the plays of the front that were popular at the end of World War I. Wilhelm Westecker, however, is quick to point out how *Der Einsame* was different from the plays at the end of the war, which for the most part had lost their appeal stylistically and politically. Westecker remarks that the while the "the inclination towards the pain of the world so common in the years around the War's end does lie over the piece somewhat," the play does "not lose itself to abstract constructions, as was usual at that time. It is neither emotional nor frivolous."[101] While Westecker is quick to point out how this play is different from the Expressionist anti-war plays which immediately followed World War I, he and other critics all acknowledge that this

---

[99] The dispute concerning the staging of his work will be discussed in the next chapter.

[100] Franz Götke, "Ein Menschenuntergang. 'Der Einsame' von Hanns Johst mit Theodor Loos im Deutschen Theater," May 24, 1941, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[101] Wilhelm Westecker, "Das Seelerdrama eines Genies. Hanns Johsts 'Der Einsame' im Deutschen Theater," May 24, 1941, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

play, stylistically, is quite different from Johst's later works.[102]

The content is also different. Rather than focus on great patriots or military figures, this play's protagonist is the playwright Christian Dietrich Grabbe. Marvin Carlson describes the German Romantic playwright's work as grotesque, full of extravagant imagination and reveling in satire and burlesque.[103] Johst's play is short, composed of nine scenes. At the beginning of the play, Grabbe is at the height of his creativity. Then, in the second scene, his beloved wife dies delivering their stillborn child. This breaks Grabbe, who turns to alcohol for comfort. His life spirals downward, he loses his last friend when he makes an advance towards his friend's wife, and ultimately he is let go by his publisher. His artistic promise is wasted, and when he is confronted by his mother, he is forced to acknowledge the isolation and deterioration of his life.

Hilpert himself directed the production, and the reviews point to the production's success. Franz Götke remarks that Hilpert creates distinct tones for the different scenic locations within the play.[104] Westecker also praises Hilpert for giving the piece new life with "a very worthy performance." Westecker felt that Hilpert understood that the play was a "drama of the soul," and called attention to Grabbe's "seizing want…stormy enthusiasm…and disappointment."[105] Hilpert's greatest

---

[102] This flirtation with Expression by Nazi artists was quite popular in the early years of the regime. Goebbels himself was drawn to Expressionism, and its place within Nazi cultural policy was greatly debated in the early years of the Reich. See Chapter One for more information on this debate.

[103] Marvin Carlson, *The German Stage in the Nineteenth Century* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1972), 10.

[104] Götke, "Ein Menschenuntergang. 'Der Einsame' von Hanns Johst mit Theodor Loos im Deutschen Theater."

[105] Westecker, "Das Seelerdrama eines Genies. Hanns Johsts 'Der Einsame' im Deutschen

achievement appears to have been his interpretation of the mood and tone of the play, and an understanding of Grabbe's emotional state, "the intoxicating feeling of the creative one…and the consciousness of human inadequacy."[106] As a creative person himself, it is not surprising that Hilpert was able to understand these feelings of intoxication and inadequacy, and the presence of these qualities within the play's characterization of Grabbe shed some light on Hilpert's choice of this particular production for the Deutsches Theater repertoire.

In addition to praising Hilpert for capturing the proper tone for the production, the reviewers praise his choice of actor for the lead role: Theodor Loos. His performance is acclaimed in each review I consulted. Götke calls the performance "An achievement of high artistic rank!" In Loos's Grabbe, "the pain is as true as the bitter laughter," and the fantastic genius is as genuine as the brooding drunkard.[107] Westecker points out that Loos altered his appearance to match Grabbe's, with Loos possessing Grabbe's "famous high forehead." But his praise of Loos goes beyond his physical similarities to Grabbe. He writes that Loos fills "the difficult, strongly monological role with an unusual projecting strength in the beautiful-sounding language. He steered reliably through the cliffs of emotionalism and carried the substantial performance."[108] Richard Biedrzynski supports the positive assessment of Loos's portrayal, commenting that Loos makes Grabbe very human, capturing his

---

Theater."

[106] Götke, "Ein Menschenuntergang. 'Der Einsame' von Hanns Johst mit Theodor Loos im Deutschen Theater."

[107] Ibid.

[108] Westecker, "Das Seelerdrama eines Genies. Hanns Johsts 'Der Einsame' im Deutschen Theater."

"childlike faith," and his genius, his drunkenness, and finally the recognition of his ruined life.[109]

By all accounts, Loos gave a tour de force performance, which was becoming unusual in Hilpert's theatre as he sought to curtail the cultivation of the actor's genius just for genius' sake. He challenged the idea of a "star" system within the theatre (although there were certainly famous actors working at the Deutsches Theater), instead placing the text and the entirety of the performance in the forefront. Even Herbert Ihering, supporter of Brecht and his distancing effects, was unable to adjust to Hilpert's subversion of the star system, writing "Hilpert wanted to put the laws of art in the place of devastating individualism, but in doing this he frequently obliterated the sovereign artist."[110] But Hilpert's desire was simply a logical evolution of his dedication to the text and his humanist view of the theatre, which was to be a "resort of humanity" and illuminate the human condition for the audience.[111] Even in this case, the strength and centrality of Loos's performance grows out of the text; Grabbe is the central character within the play, dominating the piece, and the actor playing Grabbe must carry the production. The piece is a star vehicle, and Loos's performance is not an endorsement of a star system of actors but a reflection of Hilpert's loyalty to his interpretation of the play.

The attention to other roles did not suffer, despite Loos's dominance of the production. The supporting roles were very warmly received. As Götke writes, "the

---

[109] Richard Biedrzynski, "Im Deutschen Theater. Tragödie des Einsamen. Hanns Johst Grabbedrama mit Theodor Loos in der Hauptrolle," no date, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[110] Ihering, *Regie*, 80.

[111] Hilpert, *Formen des Theaters*, 22.

smallest role of the …piece is occupied with perfection." He mentions Friedrich Maurer's court usher as an excellent example of how a "meager shape of an episode can gain its own human outlines."[112] Hilpert was praised for fully integrating these smaller roles into the action of the play, linking them to Grabbe's fate.[113] A complete, integrated production was Hilpert's goal, and that relied on fully developed characters across the board, not merely in the starring role. And, according to the reviews, Hilpert's production successfully achieved that goal.

Although the bombastic, overblown pro-Nazi sentiment found in Johst's later work is absent in *Der Einsame*, the politics of the playwright and his position within the Nazi bureaucracy was surely not forgotten by the audience—it was certainly not ignored by the critics. Several of them take special pains in their reviews to mention the *völkisch* qualities of the work. Wilhelm Westecker, Walter Horn, and Richard Biedrzynski all favorably compare Grabbe to Kleist, so that the very choice of subject matter makes this a *völkisch* play. It is about a great German artist who lived in a time which Nazi ideology mythologized as a previous apex of German culture and political strength. This appreciation of Grabbe was held by important Nazi figures as well. Wilhelm Westecker points out in his review that Dramaturg of the Reich Rainer Schlösser called Grabbe "the only *völkisch* visionary of his time."[114]

Westecker comments that Johst interprets the biographical facts as "the

---

[112] Götke, "Ein Menschenuntergang. 'Der Einsame' von Hanns Johst mit Theodor Loos im Deutschen Theater."

[113] Biedrzynski, "Im Deutschen Theater. Tragödie des Einsamen. Hanns Johst Grabbedrama mit Theodor Loos in der Hauptrolle," and Westecker, ""Das Seelerdrama eines Genies. Hanns Johsts 'Der Einsame' im Deutschen Theater."

[114] Westecker, "Das Seelerdrama eines Genies. Hanns Johsts 'Der Einsame' im Deutschen Theater."

general circumstances of a genius from German blood." He specifically calls attention to the German nature of Grabbe's blood, a typical trope of Nazi ideology. Westecker's own political viewpoint is clearly announced when he remarks that the play itself contains all of the "elements of the German life-feeling, which was betrayed at that time by so many."[115] For Westecker, Johst's work stands in contrast to the betrayal of the Weimar Republic that occurred just one year after the play was written. But Westecker is not alone in his *völkisch* reading of the play. Walter Horn remarks that *Der Einsame* stands against the "stage liberalism" and "cultural purge" of the Weimar Republic. He goes on to state that the play is a perfect example of the theatre as a "cultish place of the people, a carrier...of mental strength for the community."[116] Horn goes beyond framing the play as a strong stand against the evil liberalism that plagued Germany in the time of the Weimar Republic. For Horn, this play is a fulfillment of what the theatre should be within the Nazi regime, that is a meeting place to imbue the German people with pride and strength, solidifying and inspiring the *Volk*. And this kind of inspiration would be particularly striking and useful during wartime.

There is no indication, nor is there any reason to believe, that Hilpert intended to stage the quintessential Nazi play. If that had been his intention, the more famous Johst history plays *Schlageter* or *Thomas Paine* would have been more appropriate. Yes, Hilpert did bow to Nazi pressure and stage works by Nazi-favored playwrights,

---

[115] Ibid.

[116] Walter Horn, "Genie Ohne Volk. Heute im Deutschen Theater: 'Der Einsame' von Hanns Johst," May 24, 1941, n.p; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

but mostly in the pre-war years; many of those plays were now out of favor. Why, then, did Hilpert choose to stage a play by Johst that could so easily be interpreted as supportive of Nazi ideology?

There might have been some political maneuvering in the decision to stage a play by Johst. The relationship between Hilpert and Rainer Schlösser, always marked by tension, became particularly stormy while Hilpert was planning the 1941/42 season. While artistically solid, the Deutsches Theater did not draw the audience numbers of the more flamboyant, star-driven Berliner Staatstheater, a point which was of great concern to Schlösser. Schlösser went so far as to suggest to Hilpert that he take a vacation and recuperate from a recent illness. Hilpert declined Schlösser's offer, writing in a letter that he did not want to be known as the one who "was not sufficient to lead a theatre because he was not healthy." He went on to say that his health had nothing to do with running the Deutsches Theater.[117] Eventually a compromise was struck, with a season that predominantly featured German classics: Schiller, Raimund, and three plays by Kleist. There were no new Shakespeare productions, only six performances of *The Taming of the Shrew* from the previous season, and Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*.

This tension between Schlösser and Hilpert had long been brewing, stemming from Hilpert's isolation from the Ministry and the lack of acceptable Nazi plays staged at the Deutsches Theater. Schlösser was not as willing to push Nazi ideology and cultural policy aside as Goebbels, and was angered by Hilpert's lack of dedication to the new Nazi theatre. Hilpert's decision to stage *Der Einsame* during

[117] Dillman, 161.

this time (although a year before the case mentioned in the previous paragraphs), while continuing to stage the somewhat subversive morning celebrations, can certainly be read as a political concession to Schlösser and his office in an effort to mollify the Dramaturg of the Reich.

But this play also appealed to Hilpert's artistic aesthetic and philosophy. His vision of the theatre was deeply grounded by a humanistic view of the world. In 1942, Hilpert wrote that the task of the theatre was "to hold up before our suffering and seeking brethren the complete image of mankind."[118] This play certainly achieves that aim, looking at a man as he falls from grace, the whole while struggling to create something of artistic worth. That connection to mankind, as well as the play's focus on creativity and art, help to explain why Hilpert would choose to direct this play. Hilpert's quest to bring humanity to his audience given the lack of humanity espoused by the Nazi regime can in itself be seen as a subtle political act. But whatever his reasons, his choice produced another result. Regardless of intention, staging a play by Johst in the midst of wartime could be read as a legitimization of Nazi cultural policy.

One of the last productions at the Deutsches Theater before the closure of all Berlin theatres in September 1944 was Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, directed by Hilpert. Hilpert had directed the production at the Deutsches Theater in 1935, but it had not been included in the repertoire since that season. This production featured a new cast and was greeted very warmly by the reviewers, usurping memories of the earlier production.

---

[118] Hilpert, *Formen des Theaters*, 43.

Caspar Neher was the set designer for the production, creating a landscape "which scoffs at all geography, in order to give further clearance to the fantasy," a landscape "dipped . . . into a wonderful fairy-tale blue, with an enormous floating canopy . . . while on the dome horizon a mountain panorama greets, or the asterisk-scattered sky shines."[119] The understated design allowed the text and the performance to shine. Florian Kienzl compared the simplicity of the piece to the simplicity of the original Shakespearean performances at the Globe.[120]

The reviews unanimously praised the production and Hilpert's direction. Kienzl remarks that the play "became a rare joy—as performance." He continues that in the past, directors sought to hide the more fantastical and unbelievable behavior of the play and its characters in a grand operatic style with large scenes, music and dance, but not Hilpert. For example, past productions of the play included elaborate choreographed ballets for the sheep shearing celebration. Hilpert's production, on the other hand, had a "casual, rural dance," in the background which served as a foil for the main action taking place. Choices such as this created a "more honest and clean" production, and the simplicity "let each attraction work unstressed, [and] gave the play the expression of the original theatre."[121]

Richard Biedrzynski also admired the production, especially the tone set by Hilpert. He observes that with his production of *A Winter's Tale*, Hilpert captures the

---

[119] Paul Kersten, "Berauscht von so viel Schönheit. 'Das Wintermärchen' mit der Dorsch und Balser im Deutschen Theater," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, April 29, 1944, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[120] Florian Kienzl, "Shakespeares alte-neue Gestalt. Das Wintermärchen mit Käthe Dorsch im Deutschen Theater," *12 Uhr-Blatt*, April 29, 1944, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[121] Ibid.

essence of "smiling under the tears," and creates "utopian fairy tale residences of the south" and a romantic Arcadian setting. Biedrzynski writes that Hilpert took this play, whose "improbability" makes it so difficult, and spins an "incomprehensibly easy, tender fabric," combining the sense of "earnestness and loutish behavior, . . . grace and celebration."[122] Ludwig Brunhuber also praised the tone of the play, admiring Hilpert's direction that revealed Shakespeare's wisdom and became "with each scene more of a festive gift, a fairy tale in the most beautiful sense of the word, an enchantment of the finest artistic culture and mysticism of knowledge."[123] In this production, Hilpert appeared to have created that theatre of serene grace that he had advocated as early as 1936. He was able to capture the light, effortless feeling of the earlier comedies he had directed, but combined it with a serenity, and at times, a sadness that captured the imagination and attention of the audience.

A great deal of credit for the production's success was due to the performances of Ewald Balser as Leontes and Käthe Dorsch as Hermione. Paul Kersten writes that to hear Balser speak is "to hear a special benefit each time," and praises his convincing shift from quick-tempered rashness to genuine, quiet humility.[124] Florian Kienzl agrees with Kersten's praise. He commends Balser for his portrayal of Leontes, who did not "somehow try to psychologically deduce"

---

[122] Richard Biedrzynski, "Nachspiel zum 'Othello': 'Das Wintermärchen' von Heinz Hilpert neu inszeniert im Deutsches Theater," *Völkischer Beobachter*, May 1944, n.p; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[123] Ludwig Brunhuber, " 'Das Wintermärchen' Erstaufführung im Deutschen Theater," *Berliner Morgenpost*, April 30, 1944, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[124] Paul Kersten, "Berauscht von so viel Schönheit. 'Das Wintermärchen' mit der Dorsch und Balser im Deutschen Theater."

Leontes's jealousy, but, in Kienzl's words, "simply, there it was."[125] For Kienzl, Balser's agony was so urgent and elemental that Leontes became more effective and moving than Othello (which was currently playing at the Staatstheater). Richard Biedrzynski commends Balser for making Leontes's madness convincing. Balser is very natural, but more importantly, he maintains the "melody of the language." For Biedrzynksi, there are few actors of the "classical stage" who so accurately yet sincerely capture Shakespeare's language.[126]

Dorsch's Hermione received equal admiration. Kersten calls her Hermione "feminine and good natured," the ideal image of the fairy tale queen.[127] Kienzl compares Dorsch's "simple motherly blondeness" to a Dürer Madonna.[128] Fechter writes that with her deeply felt performance, Dorsch brought "melody to the work," giving a richer, deeper portrayal than is the custom with the role.[129] Biedrzynski also calls her a Madonna, and notes that the role of Hermione is essentially a passive one, with her main objective being the proclamation of her innocence. It is here that Dorsch triumphs for Biedrzynski, reproaching Leontes's error "with quiet complaint instead of with loud accusation—that is the secret and human revelation of this

---

[125] Florian Kienzl, "Shakespeares alte-neue Gestalt. Das Wintermärchen mit Käthe Dorsch im Deutschen Theater."

[126] Richard Biedrzynski, "Nachspiel zum 'Othello': 'Das Wintermärchen' von Heinz Hilpert neu inszeniert im Deutsches Theater."

[127] Kersten, "Berauscht von so viel Schönheit. 'Das Wintermärchen' mit der Dorsch und Balser im Deutschen Theater."

[128] Kienzl, "Shakespeares alte-neue Gestalt. Das Wintermärchen mit Käthe Dorsch im Deutschen Theater."

[129] Paul Fechter, "Shakespeares 'Wintermärchen' Deutsches Theater," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 29, 1944, n.p.; clipping file, Heinz Hilpert Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

scene."[130] The descriptions of Dorsch's Hermione do reflect some Nazi beliefs about the ideal woman: blond, essentially passive, ultimately devoted to her husband. But this was not a radical departure from the role's portrayal in the past. Dorsch received the most praise for taking the ideal depiction of the falsely accused queen and imbuing her with sincerity, warmth and believability.

Paul Fechter calls Hilpert's production of *A Winter's Tale* "perhaps …the most beautiful [performance] of this season."[131] Paul Kersten concurs, writing that the grateful audience is "drunk from so much beauty."[132] The choice of play was a wise one for Hilpert. It played to his strengths, and reflected his own philosophy of what the theatre should be, reflecting both the triumph and suffering of humanity, aspiring to a religious condition. The choice is also understandable given the realities outside of the theatre. Hilpert staged a play filled with serious, in fact deadly, misunderstandings and errors in judgement. But in the end, love and unity prevail, light triumphs over darkness. This hopeful tone would strike a particular chord with a theatre-going public that had received instructions on how to respond if there was an air-raid during the evening's performance. There is no mention of politics and ideology is absent from the reviews. There was a life affirming quality to the production, but it did not offer the empty escapism or light comedy espoused by Hitler in the later war years. With this production, Hilpert appears to have achieved his goal of creating a humanistic, a-political theatre.

---

[130] Biedrzynski, "Nachspiel zum 'Othello': 'Das Wintermärchen' von Heinz Hilpert neu inszeniert im Deutsches Theater."

[131] Fechter, "Shakespeares 'Wintermärchen' Deutsches Theater."

[132] Kersten, "Berauscht von so viel Schönheit. 'Das Wintermärchen' mit der Dorsch und Balser im Deutschen Theater."

Four months later, the Deutsches Theater, along with all other theatres in Berlin, were closed as part of the "total war effort." Shortly before the closure, Hilpert was accused of making anti-Nazi statements in a railway carriage. A conversation between Hilpert and the surgeon Dr. Sauerbruch was overheard by a Dr. Mahlo, a bureaucrat in the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda. In this conversation, Hilpert mentioned that he "had only known decent Jews."[133] Because of these statements, Hilpert was questioned by the Gestapo. When theatre workers were called up for war work in factories, Hilpert was the only theatre director to be called up, and he worked in the Telefunken factory, even though he was fifty-four years old.[134] When Goebbels set up the *Volkssturm* (home army) to engage the Allied armies in street combat, Hilpert was called to active service. He only escaped serving because an empathetic doctor diagnosed him with suffering a mild heart attack.[135] No doubt his overheard comments, along with his ambivalent, sometimes stormy relationship with the Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and Rainer Schlösser led to Hilpert's last appointment within the Third Reich.

The relationship between the Deutsches Theater and the Nazi regime was one of many highs and lows. While Carl Ludwig Achaz did his best to toe the party line and create a theatre that reflected the ideology and developing cultural policies of the Third Reich, he was ultimately unsuccessful. He attempted to stage a vision of the new Germany, but the inconsistent artistic quality of the productions was not

[133] Dr. Mahlo's comments are reprinted in Dillman, 189-90.

[134] Dillman, 193.

[135] Strobl, 173.

acceptable to an audience that was used to the high quality of Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater, Joseph Goebbels included. Achaz was caught between Goebbels, who was interested in a high quality theatre that he could point to as a representative jewel of the Berlin theatre, and ideologues like Alfred Rosenberg, for whom a pure, ideologically sound theatre was the only goal. Achaz was not skilled enough to please Goebbels or radical enough to please the radical camp, and his tenure as Intendant of the Deutsches Theater came to an end after a little over a year.

Ultimately, Goebbels won the power struggle for political control of the cultural landscape. And as the man in political control of the Deutsches Theater, maintaining a popular, high quality theatre consistently took precedence over adherence to Nazi policy and ideology. When it became clear that the "heroic," "romantic," "non-sentimental" theatre of the Third Reich was not going to emerge, he simply changed gears, concentrating on a theatre that presented the best that German culture had to offer. He offered Heinz Hilpert the position as Intendant to achieve the high level of quality Goebbels desired.

But Goebbels and Schlösser were constantly frustrated by just how uninterested Hilpert was in reflecting Nazi ideology. His repertoire consisted mostly of classical plays, with a few Nazi-approved plays thrown in to appease his political critics. Hilpert never joined the Nazi party, an admirable stand but one that created political problems for him. He tried to isolate himself, as best he could, from the political machinations of the Ministry. He used the Deutsches Theater to smuggle his Jewish mistress out of the country (with Goebbels's knowledge) and employed colleagues like Engel and Neher, whose past associations with Brecht made them

both politically suspect. These circumstances led to the famous quote, attributed to Goebbels, that the Deutsches Theater was "like a concentration camp on vacation." According to Wilhelm Hortmann, Hilpert was on Goebbels's list of those to be killed after Germany's victory.[136]

Hilpert was bound by his allegiance to pre-Nazi theatrical values and German theatrical history. Hortmann argues that Hilpert was a-political by nature (a claim Gründgens also made, which I will discuss in the next chapter), and not interested in being politically active on any level.[137] But Hortmann, as well as Glen Gadberry, praise Hilpert for his artistic resistance to Nazi cultural policy. Hortmann writes that Hilpert's (and Gründgens's) ability:

> . . . at the very center of Nazi surveillance, to preserve the spirit of their institutions, to shield endangered individuals from persecution, to fend off infiltration and minimize concessions to the regime, . . . are proof of honourable conduct under adverse and even dangerous circumstances.[138]

Some of that ability can be attributed to Goebbels's willingness to overlook political insubordination. But, there is no doubt that Hilpert risked a great deal to stay true to his humanistic view of the theatre and preserve the reputation of the Deutsches Theater.

But this line of reasoning brings up a larger question: is it possible to remain a-political within such a highly politicized society? If Hilpert produced a play that has been appropriated by the Nazi regime as an example of a "German" play, and the production itself was not outwardly subversive, did that production support the

---

[136] Hortmann, 125.

[137] Ibid., 116.

[138] Ibid., 120.

cultural policies of the Reich? As Hortmann asks, "had they [the directors] not indirectly supported the Nazi regime by giving it a cultural gloss and by allowing the Nazis to appropriate achievements utterly alien to their spirit?"[139]

Was Nazi cultural policy staged at the Deutsches Theater? Perhaps not in the way intended by Hitler and Goebbels in the early years of the Third Reich, but on some level, it was. Quite simply, one cannot create theatre in a vacuum, and despite Hilpert's best intentions, his productions could be interpreted as an endorsement, or at the very least, as a validation of the current political regime. While Hilpert eschewed the bombastic propagandistic plays and productions that marked the Achaz directorship of the theatre for a more serene, humanistic theatre, the audience could never forget the swastika flags flying in the courtyard, nor could they ignore the presence of Goebbels himself in his own private box.

[139] Ibid., 116.

Chapter Four-- Berliner Staatstheater

Of the three theatres I've examined in this project, the Nazi era of the Berliner Staatstheater is the most written about, and therefore the most well-known. Not surprisingly, given the dichotomy that exists when discussing Nazi era theatre, the Staatstheater is viewed in one of two ways. On the one hand, the theatre is seen via the context of Klaus Mann's novel *Mephisto,* a book written about his ex-brother-in-law and lover, Gustaf Gründgens, who was the Intendant at the Staatstheater from 1934 to 1944.[1] In the book, the character based on Gründgens is a neurotic, talented and ambitious actor and director. He is a man without scruples who makes a deal with the devil (the Nazis) to further his career and keep himself safe. If one were to use the book as a contextual lens, then Gründgens, and by extension the theatre he ran, is a prime example of an artist abandoning his principles for security and success, even if that meant embracing and endorsing the theatrical policies of the Nazi party. On the other hand, the Staatstheater was home to what is considered to be the only open protest of the National Socialist regime ever to be staged in Nazi Germany, Jürgen Fehling's 1937 production of *Richard III*. Using this production as context, the Staatstheater was the one brave theatre that dared to question the regime.

But, as is the case with most dichotomies, this pro-/anti- regime viewpoint does not do an adequate job of interrogating what was staged at the Berliner Staatstheater during the eleven years of the Third Reich. Much like the Deutsches

---

[1] Klaus Mann, *Mephisto,* trans. Robin Smith (New York: Penguin Books, 1995). The book paints Gründgens in such a negative light that Gründgens's adopted son sued to have the book banned after it was published in West Germany in 1968. The resulting ban was not lifted in West Germany until 1981.

Theater discussed in the previous chapter, the Staatstheater reaffirmed *and* resisted the aesthetic and cultural policies of the Nazis, often within the same season. The extreme range and diversity of the productions within those eleven years, as well as the shifts in political favoritism and theatrical policy they represent, set the stage of the Staatstheater apart from the other two theatres in this study and it will prove to be the most accurate representation of the issues inherent in staging Nazi theatrical ideology and policy within Nazi Berlin.

The Staatstheater, with its long and distinguished history, was seen as an important venue for both creating a new Nazi theatrical aesthetic and legitimizing Nazi culture. The theatre, originally the Königliches Schauspielhaus, was built in 1774 for court presentations of French comedies. The theatre's prosperity solidified under the direction of August Wilhelm Iffland. According to Elisabeth Schulz Hostetter, Iffland's tenure as Intendant defined the "artistic ideals and performance traditions" of the Schauspielhaus.[2] Under his direction, the Schauspielhaus eschewed the Romantic playwrights and became known for critically acclaimed productions of classics by Schiller and Shakespeare. Iffland's legacy at the theatre was so monumental that his portrait remained in a prominent position in the administrative office regardless of the political climate.[3]

During Iffland's tenure the theatre was completely renovated in 1802 by Karl Langhans, designer of Berlin's Brandenburg Gate. According to Hostetter,

---

[2] Elisabeth Schulz Hostetter, *The Berlin State Theater under the Nazi Regime—A Study of the Administration, Key Productions, and Critical Responses from 1933-1944* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 30.

[3] For an in-depth account of Iffland's tenure at the Staatstheater, see Alfred Mühr, *Rund um den Gendarmenmarkt von Iffland bis Gründgens* (Hamburg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1965).

Langhans's design broke with the tradition of basing theatre architecture on Italian or French models. She writes that the theatre "defined a new movement toward a specifically Prussian/Germanic style of architecture."[4] The theatre burned to the ground in 1817 and was redesigned by Karl Friedrich Schinkel. When it reopened in 1821, the theatre:

> featured a long, impressive stairway flanked at the front by two lions and leading to a six columned entryway. Two classical friezes accented the roof of the building, and a massive statue of a warrior in a chariot topped the structure. Internally the theater maintained classed seating with a box, pit and gallery design.[5]

The Neo-classical design was suggestive of a Greek temple. The elaborate nature of the design reflected Prussia's growing power and desire to be the center of a national, German culture. It also foreshadowed the dominance of classical and neo-classical architecture within the National Socialist regime.

Kaiser Wilhelm II authorized some renovations to the theatre in 1904, but those renovations were limited to necessary structural repairs and a downsizing of the auditorium. The Kaiser himself paid for 39% of the renovations, a fact which illustrates the importance of the theatre within the cultural landscape of the city and Germany as well. Kaiser Wilhelm also kept a tight reign on the types of plays being produced at the royal theatre, refusing to allow "decadent works" to be performed there, often firing directors who disagreed with his conservative aesthetic. [6]

That conservative tradition came to an abrupt end with the end of World War I

---

[4] Hostetter, 25.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 31.

and Wilhelm's flight to Holland in 1918. With the advent of the Weimar Republic, the theatre changed more than its name, exchanging the "Königliches" with the more democratic "Staatliches." Under the direction of Leopold Jessner, the Staatliches Schauspielhaus embraced the experimental theatre of the Weimar Republic.[7]

Jessner's inaugural production of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, described by Michael Patterson as a "cultural 'visiting-card' of the Weimar Republic,"[8] abandoned the conservative aesthetic of the Staatliches Schauspielhaus, polarizing the theatre-going public and creating a theatrical scandal. The choice of the classic was seen as an appropriate one, but Jessner took the work out of its historical context, making it "an unambiguously republican affair."[9] Gessler, the Austrian vice-regent who forces Tell to shoot the famed apple off of the head of Tell's son, wore a costume which resembled a Prussian uniform, the play's most patriotic lines were cut, the set was symbolic and suggestive rather than realistic, and the riot which greeted opening night almost stopped the performance. The traditionalist audience members who yearned for the old days of the Kaiser's regime were horrified at the treatment of the beloved German classic, but the protests went beyond the intellectual level of aesthetic differences. In the eyes of some audience members, the production was seen as a rejection of German national identity. As Gerwin Strobl writes in his insightful examination of the production, Jessner "turned a play of *national* liberation

---

[7] For more information on Jessner and his leadership of the Staatliches Schauspielhaus, see Michael Patterson, *Revolution in German Theatre 1900-1933* (Boston: Routledge & Degan Paul, 1981) and Willett, *Theatre of the Weimar Republic*.

[8] Patterson, 88.

[9] Gerwin Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage. German Theatre and Society, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 16.

into one of *political* liberation."[10] This would be disconcerting to a conservative, nationalist audience member under normal circumstances, but against the backdrop of the humiliating defeat of World War I, the Treaty of Versailles, and the perceived attack on Germany itself, the conservatives were outraged. There was also yet another layer to the disgust with the new direction of the Schauspielhaus. A certain faction of the nationalist, right-wing conservative movement firmly connected Jessner's production to his identity as a Jewish director.[11] In labeling the production as the product of "yet another" Jewish director in Berlin, the anti-Semitic right had a clear example of what the decadent and degenerate Jews were doing to the beloved theatrical institutions of Berlin.

The bad reviews in nationalist newspapers and growing anti-Semitism in the waning years of the Weimar Republic eventually led to Jessner's resignation in 1930, just two years before Max Reinhardt would hand over the Deutsches Theater to Karl Heinz Martin and Rudolf Beer. And, like Reinhardt, Jessner fled Germany in 1933.

In the last few years of the Weimar Republic, Ernst Legal, an actor and director from Darmstadt, was named the Intendant of the Staatstheater. The repertoire during his tenure reflected the political upheaval of the time. In December 1931, Jürgen Fehling staged *Rauhnacht*, a nationalistic blood and soil peasant drama by the Austrian playwright Richard Billinger. Seven weeks later Bertolt Brecht directed *Mann ist Mann* according to his theories of "gestic" acting.

When Hitler was named Reich Chancellor on January 30, 1933, the

---

[10] Ibid., 30.

[11] Willett, 67.

Staatstheater became a theatre of the Third Reich and was quickly subsumed in the seizure of power. Hermann Göring, as the Prussian Minister President, quickly moved to secure control of the Prussian state theatres before Goebbels could do the same.[12] He was not only given permission to make staffing decisions, he was given a mandate to "carry out the reorganization of the [Berlin Staats]theater in order to continue the old Prussian tradition of cultivating exemplary art."[13] This statement clearly illustrates one aspect of the National Socialist agenda in regards to the Staatstheater, mainly to legitimize the regime through the "rehabilitation" of German culture. In doing so, the German public could be reassured that the new regime was a cultured one whose only desire was to return Germany to its former glory. By associating the Third Reich with the larger idea of a romanticized, historical "German-ness," the Nazis hoped to bring legitimacy to a party that was primarily associated with street thugs and peasants.

As in other theatres across Germany, the Nazi seizure of power resulted in significant changes in the company of the theatre. According to Hans Daiber, ten actors out of the sixty-two member company lost their positions due to religion, ethnic background, or political affiliation. Numerous technicians also lost their jobs.[14] Göring also fired the Intendant and placed Dr. Franz Ulbrich in the position. Ulbrich was a conservative director who had been the head of the national theatres in Weimar, a stronghold of playwrights and theatre practitioners with National Socialist leanings.

---

[12] For more information on the rivalry between Goebbels and Göring, see chapters one and three.

[13] Georg Droescher, quoted in Hostetter, 40.

[14] Hans Daiber, *Schaufenster der Diktatur: Theater im Machtbereich Hitlers* (Stuttgart: Verlag Günther Neske, 1995), 57.

As such, he appeared particularly well-suited for the task of turning the Staatstheater into an exemplary National Socialist theatre. And although Göring had wrestled control of the Staatstheater away from Goebbels, Goebbels made sure he had a say in at least one position. As head of the Chamber of Culture, Goebbels hired the fervent National Socialist playwright Hanns Johst for the position of Staatstheater dramaturg. Johst would therefore function as Goebbels's eyes in his rival's theatre, often wearing a black SS uniform to the Staatstheater to intimidate the company.[15]

The inaugural production of the Staatstheater in the Third Reich was, not surprisingly, a highly politicized event. The premiere of *Schlageter*, written by the dedicated National Socialist playwright and Staatstheater dramaturg Hanns Johst, took place on April 20, 1933, and was meant to be a special treat for the Führer's birthday. Upon finishing *Schlageter* in 1932, Johst had dedicated it to Hitler, and it had been broadcast via German radio in the run-up to the March 1933 elections, but the play had never been staged before the night of Hitler's birthday. Hitler himself attended the premiere, as did Goebbels and Göring. The choice of that particular play on that particular night, a night filled with much pomp and circumstance, clearly and strongly conveyed a strong political message about the role of the Staatstheater in the new regime. It was to reclaim the artistic excellence of old, but it also signaled a new age for German theatre by producing the "heroic, steely romantic" plays Goebbels envisioned when discussing Nazi art in 1933.

The choice of Johst, and *Schlageter* in particular, was not a surprising one. Johst was well-known within the National Socialist theatre community. Hitler had

[15] Hostetter, 47.

enjoyed the 1920 premiere of his play *Der König*,[16] which implored leaders to rule with an iron fist. According to John London, Hitler saw the play seventeen times.[17] His play *Thomas Paine*, which premiered in 1927, was considered by critic Hermann Wanderscheck to be "the first political drama of the new Germany."[18]

In *Schlageter*, Johst romanticized the martyred Leo Schlageter, a German veteran of World War I who opposed the French invasion and occupation of the industrial Ruhr valley in 1923 as a means of extracting war reparations, and the Weimar Republic's policy of passive resistance to the invasion. After blowing up a French transport filled with German coal, Schlageter was captured and executed in a public square in 1923.

Not surprisingly, Schlageter was embraced by the National Socialists. Hitler praised him in *Mein Kamp* as an "uncompromising nationalist."[19] As Elizabeth Schulz Hostetter writes, his wholesome upbringing (the son of a lower-middle class Catholic farmer), military aggressiveness (he also fought in a private militia against the Bolsheviks in the early 1920s), and his dedication to Germany made him "the ideal model for a potential SS man."[20] And the play is not subtle about this point: in the second act a character says of Schlageter "We youth who stand beside Schlageter do not support him because he was the last soldier of the World War, but because he

---

[16] Ibid., 75.

[17] John London, "Introduction," in *Theatre Under the Nazis*, ed. John London, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 7.

[18] Hermann Wanderscheck, *Deutsche Dramatik der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Bong, 1938), 93. The Staatstheater production of *Thomas Paine* will be discussed later in this chapter.

[19] Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 4.

[20] Hostetter, 81.

is the first soldier of the Third Reich."[21] The structure of the play is not revolutionary; its thematic content and tone are what classify *Schlageter* as a new, National Socialist work. It is inherently *völkisch*, featuring a group of young men who stand up to evil outside forces to defend the German people. The dialogue is sentimental, the rhetoric exaggerated, full of heroic monologues.

But the choice of *Schlageter* was meant to appeal to audience members who were not Nazi Party members and make them sympathetic to the Nazi regime. As Gerwin Strobl notes, the occupation of the Ruhr had "caused a profound national trauma." Many Germans felt impotent in their inability to stop the invasion and subsequent occupation. Strobl writes that "it is not too fanciful to suggest that they felt as a father would who had been forced to watch an intruder break into his house and rape his child."[22] Even those who were not committed Nazis would probably have been sympathetic to the subject matter of the play. To further win over audience members to his cause, Johst has his hero begin the play unsure of what to do, echoing the arguments of moderate Germans who were horrified by the occupation but reluctant to fight against it. As the play goes on, Schlageter, and by extension the audience members, are convinced that the only course is one of defiant action.

The production itself was widely publicized in the weeks leading up to its premiere. Hostetter describes the number of advertisements in conservative newspapers as "conspicuous."[23] Excerpts from the script were broadcast on the radio

---

[21] Hanns Johst, *Schlageter* in Günther Rühle, ed. *Zeit und Theater Diktatur und Exil: 1933-1945* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1974), 115.

[22] Strobl, 38-9.

[23] Hostetter, 87.

during peak listening hours. The amount of publicity, the date of the premiere, the venue; all of these factors made it clear to the public that this was to be a political event, as well as a theatrical one. The conflation of the political and the theatrical was in many ways the goal of the evening, an example of the National Socialist theatrical aesthetic, as well as a useful propaganda tool for the regime. The critics were obviously aware of the political nature of the evening: the review in the *Berliner Morgenpost* listed the names of the Nazi officials attending the production before mentioning the play's name.[24]

One of the play's actors added another layer of political interest to the production. The part of Alexandra, the female lead and Schlageter's love interest, was played by Emmy Sonnemann. *Schlageter* marked her debut in Berlin, a debut made possible by her long-time boyfriend, Minister President Hermann Göring. Göring had met Sonnemann before the seizure of power when she was an actress at the National Theatre in Weimar. When he took office in Prussia, he brought the forty year old Sonnemann to Berlin and gave her a job as a full time employee at the Staatstheater as "a tribute of love."[25] She would later go on to marry Göring and retire from the stage, as acting was not a respectable profession for the first lady of Prussia . But her political connections certainly got her the part, and left the critics with an interesting quandary. Although Goebbels had yet to outlaw critical reviews of theatrical performances, the critics had to have known that it was in their best

---

[24] W. R., " 'Schlageter': Schauspiel von Hanns Johst im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus," *Berliner Morgenpost*, April 21, 1933, n.p.,; clipping file, Wilhelm Richter Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[25] Hostetter, 92.

interests to try and avoid outright negative comments about Emmy Sonnemann's performance.[26] That being said, most of the reviews did not seem impressed with her performance. Hans Flemming writes that the women were "less convincingly represented," but he qualifies that statement by noting that Johst "did not handle these characters with as much love because it was a man's play."[27] Herbert Ihering was the most openly critical of her performance, writing that her acting was not up to par. He writes that her dialogue was "weakly commanded," and that her performance lacked the "final melting together of role and actor."[28]

But most of the reviews focused on Sonnemann's appearance, perhaps to avoid an open critique of her performance. Flemming remarks that she is attractive, and even Ihering acknowledges that she was physically well-suited for the part. The review in the *Berliner Morgenpost* noted that Sonnemann was "sympathetic" and "blonde."[29] In production photographs, Sonnemann looks like an archetypal Aryan ingénue, if one could ignore the fact that she was forty. She is a tall, blue-eyed, blonde woman. Her blonde hair is in a bun, her dress is conservative, as is her make-up and her simple pearl necklace. The character's focus on family, her loving support of Schlageter and her devotion to his cause, combined with Sonnemann's physical

---

[26] Those who felt that way were wise to trust their intuition. In her book *Women of the Third Reich*, Anna Maria Sigmund writes that an opera singer who made questionable comments about Sonnemann's reputation was arrested for her comments. She served three years in jail for insulting the "First Lady of the Reich." Anna Maria Sigmund, *Women of the Third Reich* (Ontario: NDE Publishing, 2000), 45-6.

[27] Hans Flemming, " 'Schlageter': Staatstheater," April 21, 1933, n.p.; clipping file, Wilhelm Richter Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[28] Herbert Ihering, "Staatliches Schauspielhaus: 'Schlageter,'" *Börsen-Courier*, April 21, 1933.

[29] W. R., " 'Schlageter': Schauspiel von Hanns Johst im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus."

appearance, make her the example of a perfect National Socialist woman, in spite of Sonnemann's age and acting skill.

In contrast to Sonnemann's inexperience on the stage of the Staatstheater, the role of General X, the villain of the play, was played by the highly respected Albert Bassermann. Bassermann had worked with the great directors of the Weimar Republic, including Max Reinhardt and Leopold Jessner. It was Bassermann who played Wilhelm Tell in Jessner's scandalous production at the Staatstheater in 1919. He was so well-respected that he was the bearer of the Iffland ring, ceremoniously handed down from generation to generation to the best actor in Germany.

Yet his high profile Weimar career did not make Bassermann less attractive to the Nazi bureaucrats running the *Theaterkammer*. To the contrary, his talent, combined with his acceptable "racial" background, made Bassermann a key target for "rehabilitation." By reclaiming Bassermann, and other actors in a similar situation, the Nazis could prove that they were supportive of the theatre and in fact were returning the theatre to its rightful stature; to do this, the Nazis knew they needed talented actors working on Berlin stages.

Bassermann had a small role, not appearing on stage until the second act, but when he stepped onto the stage he was met with enthusiastic applause before even speaking a line, according to reviews. He was dressed in the uniform of the Weimar Republic and had white hair. Hans Flemming calls Bassermann "heroic," and writes that watching him act with "unfailing assurance as he dramatizes his few dozen words is a pleasurable experience." He goes on to comment on his distinguished

appearance, ultimately describing the performance as "unforgettable."[30] Herbert Ihering agreed, noting that although Bassermann was positioned in the background, he performed with "an exhilaration that fascinated." Ihering found Bassermann to be marvelous throughout the production.[31]

Although his performance was unanimously praised in all of the newspaper reviews I encountered, in some ways Bassermann unintentionally undermined Johst's play with his performance. As Hostetter remarks, the character of General X is meant to seem old-fashioned, ineffectual, a relic of the past.[32] But the reviews suggest that in the hands of Bassermann, General X becomes as central to the production as Schlageter, and is more sympathetic than Johst probably intended.

Despite this unforeseen situation, Bassermann did lend a great deal of credibility to the production, and as Hostetter writes, may have drawn some members of the liberal or moderate community into the theatre who might otherwise have stayed away.[33] By accepting the role, Bassermann gave the appearance of accepting the regime. In 1952, Gustaf Gründgens wrote that based on Bassermann's appearance in the propaganda piece, "If 1933 was the judging hour [concerning who was a collaborator], I can promise that Bassermann did not pass the test."[34] This may have been defensiveness on Gründgens's part, who after the war was decried as a sympathizer and spent nine months in a Russian internment camp. Bassermann's

---

[30] Hans Flemming, " 'Schlageter': Staatstheater."

[31] Herbert Ihering, "Staatliches Schauspielhaus: 'Schlageter.'"

[32] Hostetter, 100.

[33] Ibid., 101.

[34] Daiber, 52.

actions do not support this accusation, since Bassermann decided to emigrate shortly after the production, and when Alexander Moissi, a talented Jewish actor, died in Vienna, Bassermann laid the Iffland ring on his coffin "as if to indicate that no actor in the Nazi theatre was worthy to wear it."[35]

The role of Schlageter was also initially offered to a leading actor of the Weimar period, the known Communist sympathizer Hanns Otto. Unlike Bassermann, Otto refused to accept the role.[36] The role was then offered to Lothar Müthel. Müthel was not a star, but was a steadily working actor. His biggest achievement prior to starring in *Schlageter* was his direction of *Faust I* in 1932 which made Gustaf Gründgens a star for his portrayal of Mephistopheles. Unlike Bassermann, Müthel would eventually embrace the Nazis, joining the party in 1933 before all artists were legally required to be party members. He often spoke to fellow artists in praise of Hitler and the party, and he would later remark that starring as Leo Schlageter allowed him to stand out as "the beacon of the people," and provided the greatest moment of his artistic career.[37]

Most reviews praised Müthel's performance, describing him as a "German person filled with a will of steel and fervent enthusiasm."[38] Erich Krafft described his Schlageter as a man "in the struggle for his German homeland with the strongest

---

[35] Willett, 199.

[36] Later that year, Otto was arrested by the SA for his participation in underground activities. He was tortured and beaten to death in November, 1933.

[37] Daiber, 167.

[38] M.E., "Johsts "Schlageter': Hitler-Feier im Staatstheater," April 21, 1933, n.p.; clipping file, Wilhelm Richter Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

profoundness…a tender lover, and a determined fighter."[39] Critics commented on Müthels's "German-ness" and were very positive in regards to Müthel's performance. But the most striking facet of Müthel's Schalgeter that helped cement this imagery of a new German man was his appearance, although it was not specifically discussed in the reviews.

The ideal image of an Aryan male, as venerated by Nazi propaganda, was an attractive, tall, blond, blue-eyed, strong and muscular man. Müthel did not look anything like this image. He was short, with dark hair and eyes and a round, rather than chiseled face. Looking at production photos, it is clear that for the role of Schlageter, Müthel had a small, closely cropped mustache. There is no denying that, in this production, Müthel bore a close resemblance to Adolf Hitler. Schlageter's role as "the first soldier of the Third Reich" was made physically apparent whenever Müthel stepped on stage. The link Johst made between Schlageter and Hitler transcended text and gained even greater power through the physical image.

But by far the most discussed aspect of the play in all the reviews I encountered was the final scene of the play and the audience response to that moment. In the final scene, the only one to take place outside, the curtain opened to reveal Schlageter tied up moments before his execution. Müthel stood downstage, facing the firing squad upstage. After Shlageter cried out "Germany—awake! Turn into a flame, into fire! Burn—beyond imagining!"[40] the French fired their guns. The volley of shots rang out not only towards Schlageter, but towards the audience as

---

[39] Erich Krafft, "DieTragödie Schlageters: Uraufführung im Staatstheater," April 21, 1933, n.p.; clipping file, Wilhelm Richter Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[40] Johst, in Rühle, 139.

well. The theatre went completely black as all the lights went out. Strobl calls it "perhaps the most effective moment in all of Nazi theatre."[41] Critic Carl Weichardt wrote that the scene "was followed by a paralyzed silence of emotional shock."[42] This last moment of the production cemented once and for all the connection between the audience members and Schlageter himself. They, the citizens of Berlin, were also "new men" of Germany, exhorted by Schlageter to fight for the honor of Germany. It asked the audience members, in a moment of emotional shock, to take up the mantle of the fallen martyr. The moment of unity, created by the communal experience of live theatre, prompted audience members to sing *The Anthem of Germany* and *The Horst Wessel Song*. While there is some question as to whether or not the singing was spontaneous (critic Otto Ernst Hesse mentions a voice calling for the song which very well might have come from a Nazi official or supporter),[43] the connection between the emotional response of the audience and the political nature of the evening was crystallized in those moments of song.

In terms of staging the new Nazi aesthetic, the play was extremely successful. The play included all of the hallmarks of new Nazi theatre as described by Barbara Panse: "excessive nationalism, glorification of war and military death, rejection of democracy and a declaration of belief in the Führer state."[44] It highlighted the

---

[41] Strobl, 38.

[42] Carl Weichardt, "Johsts 'Schlageter' im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus," *Berliner Morgenpost,* April 21, 1933, n.p.; clipping file, Wilhelm Richter Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[43] Otto Ernst Hesse, "Hanns Johsts *Schlageter*: Uraufführung im Staatstheater," *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag,* April 21, 1933, n.p.; clipping file, Wilhelm Richter Archiv, Akademie der Künste.

[44] Barbara Panse, "Censorship in Nazi Germany: The Influence of the Reich's Ministry of Propaganda on German Theatre and Drama, 1933-1945," trans. Meg Mumford, in *Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945,*

impotency of the Weimar Republic in the face of French aggression, placing the future of Germany in the hands of an idealized German martyr who is called the first soldier of the Third Reich. As Gerwin Strobl observes, the production was a celebration of the fall of the Weimar Republic.[45] And critic Herbert Ihering, who was not a Nazi supporter, points out that despite stylistic problems in the script, specifically a strange mix of styles ranging from Expressionism to Naturalism, the premiere was an "important evening," and the play "a great success." Ihering posits that the political nature of the production may have been responsible for the success of the evening, not the "dramatic tension," or the actors themselves.[46] It is true that the political context of the evening was inescapable to the audience. Yet other political, pro-Nazi productions had emerged and were not nearly as successful.[47] Ihering's label of "success" was echoed by every review, and most dwelled on the emotional power of the last scene and the audience's outburst of song. Clearly, something in the play spoke to the audience. The traditional, domestic drama genre gave audiences a familiar lens through which to view a highly politicized moment in German history, while the electrifying last scene left the audience feeling as if they had witnessed something new and fresh. The play, while not embracing the new forms called for by Nazi ideologues, served as an excellent propaganda piece, instilling a feeling of unity and pride in the audience. The production at the

---

ed. Günter Berghaus (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 147.

[45] Strobl, 36.

[46] Herbert Ihering, "Staatliches Schauspielhaus: 'Schlageter.'"

[47] See Chapter Three for a discussion of NSDAP party member Kurt Kluge's *Ewiges Volk*, which premiered at the Deutsches Theater on April 4, 1933.

Staatstheater was a successful example of what theatre as propaganda could achieve.

Schlageter became the most performed new play in Germany. It was performed thirty four times in 1933 at the Staatstheater.[48] Strobl writes that productions appeared in more that one thousand venues in Germany during the 1933-4 season, was broadcast by German radio at least fifteen times, and became a part of the school curriculum.[49] Yet like so many other new Nazi plays, the revolutionary tone that made *Schlageter* so successful and timely in the early years of the Reich rendered it outdated and unnecessary after the Nazi's consolidation of power. A play that advocated violence as a means of fighting an oppressive regime was no longer so attractive, and the piece fell out of favor. After two performances at the Staatstheater in 1934, it disappeared from the repertoire.

Hanns Johst would also leave the Staatstheater in 1933. Johst's play *Propheten*, a propagandistic retelling of Martin Luther's story, was scheduled to premiere on December 15, 1933.[50] But when people came to the theatre that night, there was a handwritten sign on the door stating that the premiere would be delayed due to an actor's injured foot. This caused a great deal of commotion and confusion, especially since the other actors had no knowledge of the injury. In fact, the injury was fabricated; Göring had ordered the delay after the dress rehearsal. Göring was concerned about a scene featuring the beating and hanging of a Jewish character. According to Hans Daiber, Göring found the scene "too crass" for the Christmas

---

[48] Hostetter, 85.

[49] Strobl, 37.

[50] For a discussion of this play and its production at the Staatstheater, see Hostetter, 111-116.

season.[51]

The fact that this scene made Göring uncomfortable is not as surprising as one might think, given the Nazis' ideological anti-Semitism. While stereotyping of Jewish characters was deemed acceptable, overt images of violent anti-Semitism were frowned upon by Goebbels and Göring. Propaganda , as Hostetter points out, needed "to attract audience attention without shocking and appalling a conservative sense of fair play and decency."[52] Regardless of what might be happening in S.S. detention rooms (and later in concentration camps), there were some things that one did not dramatize on stage. This was especially true in cosmopolitan Berlin, where such violence could alienate potential party members and supporters in the early years of the Third Reich.

Göring demanded that the scene be immediately edited and re-blocked before the production could open. This act reinforced who was really in charge of the Staatstheater—not Johst or Intendant Franz Ulbrich, but Göring himself. Johst was so outraged by Göring's interference that he immediately resigned his position as dramaturg of the Staatstheater (and was then promoted to president of the Literature Chamber). Göring also decided that Ulbrich was too "provincial"[53]—not to mention too closely tied to Johst and Combat League for German Culture founder Alfred Rosenberg—for his liking, and Ulbrich was fired in early 1934.

The last play directed by Ulbrich to premiere on the Staatstheater stage was

---

[51] Daiber, 84.

[52] Hostetter, 115.

[53] Daiber, 83.

100 Tage, a German translation of the Italian play *Campo di Maggio*, written by Giovacchino Forzano and Benito Mussolini, the Fascist leader of Italy. There is some question as to how much of the play Mussolini actually wrote. The original publication of the play in 1931 only credits Forzano as the playwright, although Mussolini's role in the play was highly publicized in the 1934 production at the Staatstheater. It is widely believed that Mussolini provided the outline and perhaps a few lines, but that the play was really written by Forzano.

The choice of play appears to have been politically motivated. It was known that Hitler admired Il Duce, and Mussolini's belief in anti-parliamentarian government provided a common ground between the two leaders.[54] The theatrical theorists of the NSDAP were enamored of the Fascist view of theatre, specifically the Italian plans for theatres with huge audience capacities and a call for a theatre that "must be there for the people." Dramaturg Rainer Schlösser compared the massive audience capacity for an outdoor performance of *Rigoletto* in Milan with the Dietrich-Eckart Bühne, designed to stage Nazi *Thing* plays.[55] Yet not all Italian drama was embraced by Nazi Germany. Pirandello, a member of Mussolini's Fascist party, was largely absent from the Third Reich stage with only six productions in Nazi Germany, while two out of the three plays written by Mussolini and Forzano were performed in 26 theatres between 1933 and 1944, including the Staatstheater.[56] The contrast between those production statistics can be attributed to a desire to flatter Mussolini,

---

[54] The rocky relationship between Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany does not fall within the scope of this study. A good overview of the topic can be found in Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

[55] John London, "Non-German Drama in the Third Reich," in *Theatre under the Nazis*, 224.

[56] Ibid., 225.

but it can also be explained by examining the subject matter of *100 Tage*, subject matter that was a perfect fit for the early years of Nazi rule.

The play deals with the hundred days following Napoleon's return from Elba, the failure of parliamentary democracy and Napoleon's ultimate defeat. As John London points out, the play fit nicely into Nazi ideology, illustrating the demise of a people who put their faith in the parliament rather than their leader. In light of its subject matter, it is not surprising that the play was produced in eleven different towns during the first season of the Third Reich, despite the play's shortcomings.

Every review of the production that I encountered mentioned the uneven nature of the script itself. However, the criticisms are almost always the first part of a statement that goes on to excuse any problems. Overwhelmingly, the excuses focus on Mussolini's role as a great statesman. One critic writes that "It is to praise Benito Mussolini when one states that he is a greater statesman than a poet. In the confusions of this world, it is more difficult to develop a state than to write a well-built drama."[57] Richard Reidel agrees, acknowledging that a statesman like Mussolini would naturally focus on the truth of the character, not "poetic form."[58] While neither review baldly states that the writing is inferior, both take extra care to remind the reader of the difficulties of Mussolini's full-time job, and that Mussolini felt compelled to write the play because "the political material provokes his spirit."[59]

---

[57] C.W., "Hundert Tage" Erstaufführung im Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt," no date, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[58] Richard Reidel, "Mussolins Napoleon-Drama. '100 Tage' im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus," February 15, 1934, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[59] C.W.

The implication is that any faults with the text should be placed in this political context.

Franz Ulbrich's direction is largely ignored, receiving some outright criticism, along with some backhanded compliments. Carl Weichardt takes him to task for letting a march play during crucial scenes, such as the surrender at Waterloo. Reidel noted that Ulbrich avoided, with a few exceptions, "overblown scenes and acting."[60] Other than those points, his contribution to the production is completely ignored.

The one element of the production that was consistently praised was the acting of the two leads, Werner Krauß and Gustaf Gründgens. Krauß's performance as Napoleon was particularly strong. Richard Reidel points out that since the character of Napoleon was really the driving force of the play, not historical content or accuracy, Krauß's performance was very important. The short blurb in the *Berliner Tageblatt* is concerned almost entirely with which political figures were at the premiere; it does, however, mention Krauß, remarking that his performance steadily builds throughout the evening until, in the final scenes, he is almost an "eerie demon."[61] Reidel wrote that Krauß was vibrantly alive, and that he "shows the momentum of Napoleon Bonaparte's imagination, as well as the demonic, controlling energy of the Corsican."[62] Weichardt felt that Krauß gave "an unforgettable performance," and that his Napoleon seemed to "shimmer with magical power."[63]

---

[60] Reidel.

[61] " '100 Tage' Staatstheater," *Berliner Tageblatt*, February 16, 1934, n.p.: clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[62] Reidel.

[63] C.W.

According to the reviews, there seemed to be a magnetic quality to Krauß's performance. That magnetic quality falls in line with the Nazi focus on powerful male leaders, which may be why Krauß's performance struck such a cord with these critics.

Gründgens, as Napoleon's foil, Minister Fouché, provided a strong contrast to the passionate, energetic leader. His performance was also praised, and Weichardt felt that Gründgens controlled the first half of the production. According to Weichardt, Fouché was "elegant and charming."[64] Reidel agreed, calling Gründgens's performance "intelligent, interesting, and elegant." He described Gründgens's Fouché as "a cold opponent…a diplomat experienced in all areas of intrigue," who ultimately "triumphs over Napoleon's nature."[65] Especially noteworthy in these comments are adjectives like "elegant," "charming," and "intellectual." These qualities were associated with the excesses of the Weimar Republic, not with true, Aryan Germans who were valued for their passion and athleticism. Gründgens presented the perfect ideological foe for Krauß's fiery Napoleon.

Ultimately, the conflict between Fouché and Napoleon serves as a catalyst to Napoleon's downfall, and it is this downfall that most concerns the reviewers. It is also what makes the play particularly well suited to a Nazi stage. In the eyes of Weichardt and Reidel, it is the faith that the French people place in parliament instead of Napoleon that lead to his downfall and despair. According to Weichardt, France

[64] C.W.

[65] Reidel.

could only be saved by a dictatorship, not a constitutional monarchy, but Napoleon is ultimately unable to achieve that dictatorship. Weichardt, in discussing Mussolini's focus on this period of Napoleon's life, writes:

> One may be surprised that Mussolini chose to represent the decline of Napoleon, the last eruption of a dying volcano. But here lies the real tragedy, which must have seized Mussolini's heart: Napoleon succumbs not just to outside enemies, he also perishes from the decay and hopelessness of his own people.[66]

This is clearly a direct comment on Germany's own past experience as a republic and the perceived failure of this form of government. The implication is that Germany's salvation can be achieved by learning from France's mistakes and remaining loyal to its own *Führer*.

Reidel's explanation for Napoleon's failure is even more *völkisch* in tone. He claims that Napoleon did not remain true to his Corsican blood. In Reidel's mind, Napoleon's success or failure is tied directly to Napoleon recognizing and embracing his blood race. This *völkisch* concept was the cornerstone of Nazi racial theory, a theory that shaped all aspects of society within the Third Reich.

It is this aspect of the piece that made it such a strong example of a Nazi play, despite any shortcomings in the script and the nationality of the authors. Weichardt acknowledges that the scenario of "the genius standing against the 600 fools of parliament…resonates with hot topicality" and is met with "understanding and an ardent response."[67] It is the dramatization of the struggle for a nation's soul, not unlike the one going on in Germany at the time. The Third Reich was barely a year

---

[66] C.W.

[67] Ibid.

old, and the struggle for support and acceptance among non-Party members was in full swing. This Italian play served as a warning as to what could happen to a country should it choose parliamentary democracy and cold intelligence over strong, passionate, *völkisch* leadership.

Shortly after the premiere of *100 Tage*, Göring moved to fill the position of Intendant at the Staatstheater left vacant by the firing of Franz Ulbrich, asking the thirty-five year old actor Gustaf Gründgens to take the position. Gründgens surprised the theatrical community by accepting the position. In 1943 he joked to a group of colleagues "we were all very surprised when I became the leader of the theater nine years ago. I can assure you, none of you were more surprised than I was."[68] The choice was surprising for many reasons. Gründgens had very little directing experience, certainly not enough experience for one of the most highly respected theatres in the country. His most famous moment in Berlin came in the 1932 production of *Faust* at the Staatstheater, with Gründgens playing the role of Mephistopheles. It was a role he would be associated with for the rest of his career. But Gründgens's questionable (at least in the eyes of the Nazis) personal life made the appointment even stranger. In the early years of his career, he associated with Communists and anti-Nazi artists, most famously with Thomas Mann and his children Klaus and Erika, to whom he was briefly married. He also had an affair with Klaus, and this is the main reason Gründgen's appointment was so unbelievable: he was a known bi-sexual, which was punishable by imprisonment or death in Nazi Germany.

So why did Göring hire him? He was close to Göring's wife, having worked

[68] Gustaf Gründgens, "Der Hund des Aubry," *Gustaf Gründgens: Wirklichkeit des Theaters* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963), 73-4.

with her on stage, and she admired his talent. Hostetter posits that aside from Gründgens's talent, he was known to be "insecure and malleable," a man who tended to "follow rather than dominate the opinions of his associates."[69] She also points out that Gründgens had no politically influential friends or political clout (unlike Johst and Ulbrich), giving Göring unchallenged political control of the Staatstheater.[70] As for his lack of passion for the Nazi cause, Göring had just fired a dogmatic, ideologically "pure" Intendant. His main goal now was to make the Staatstheater the most critically acclaimed and admired theatre in Berlin and all of Germany. In fact, when he hired Gründgens in February, 1934, Göring told his new Intendant that his primary job was to hire as many important, well-known actors as he could before Goebbels could get them for the Deutsches Theater.[71] As for Gründgens's homosexuality, Göring promised him that it would not be a problem. Göring appointed Gründgens to the state assembly, and in 1938, Göring gave him the title "General Intendant" of Germany. These appointments, while mostly symbolic, were visible proof of Göring's protection and gave Gründgens immunity from arrest.[72] And Gründgens did what Göring had hoped he would, amassing the most star-studded ensemble in Berlin.

In May of 1935, an extensive state-funded renovation of the Schinkel designed Staatstheater was authorized. As Peter Adam writes in *Art of the Third*

---

[69] Hostetter, 54.

[70] Ibid., 117.

[71] William Grange, "Ordained Hands on the Altar of Art: Gründgens, Hilpert and Fehling in Berlin" in *Theatre in the Third Reich, The Prewar Years: Essays on Theatre in Nazi Germany*, ed. Glen W. Gadberry (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 79.

[72] Ibid., 82.

Reich, "in Hitler's mind, Schinkel's buildings, the Acropolis, and later Albert Speer's Reichskanzlei [Reich Chancellery] were to form a seamless tradition."[73] The physical building itself had to reflect the Staatstheater's importance as an example of Schinkel's architecture, as well as its importance as a shining beacon of Nazi culture. No expense was spared, with the renovations costing German taxpayers 4,600,000 DM. While the stage space was expanded and a modern turntable installed, the bulk of the renovation focused on upgrades of the building's façade and renovations to the auditorium, "precisely reproducing the look and dimensions of the original Schinkel design."[74] In fitting with the Nazi aesthetic, future glory was modeled on the past. While the NSDAP was focused on a new German future, it turned to Germany's classical past to gain legitimacy. The large sums of money spent on the renovation also illustrate how central the arts, and theatre in particular, were to the Nazi's vision of the Third Reich.

The theatre reopened in November of 1935. One of the first productions to premiere at the newly renovated theatre was Hanns Johst's *Thomas Paine*, written in 1927 by the former dramaturg of the Staatstheater. Hermann Wanderscheck called the play "the first political drama of the New Germany."[75] The choice to write about an American protagonist was a reflection of the political and cultural climate of the late 1920s, as a play about a German nationalist might have been frowned upon by certain producers. But the choice of Paine, specifically, is an interesting one because

---

[73] Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 27.

[74] Hostetter, 29.

[75] Wanderscheck, 93.

of the insight it gives us into Johst's own agenda. Johst could have picked any number of people to write about, but he chose a writer who through his work aided the cause of freedom and the American Revolution. Given Johst's outspoken sympathies with the nascent National Socialist Party, the choice is not a surprising one, as Johst clearly hopes to echo Paine's part in the future revolution in Germany.

The plot of the play is rather simple. Paine's writings inspire and aid the American Revolution. Later, Paine leaves for France, where he is imprisoned for seventeen years for opposing the execution of Louis XVI (historically, Paine was only imprisoned for nine months). When he returns home to America, he has been forgotten, and in despair commits suicide. But at his funeral, an old friend of Paine's speaks the words of Paine's hymn over his coffin and is slowly joined by voices "from everywhere, even offstage."[76] The mourners are energized and empowered, as the curtain falls.

The play moved beyond traditional patriotic themes and serves as an early example of National Socialist beliefs and theatrical aesthetic. As historian Glen Gadberry writes, the play serves as "a parable of an individual achieving immortality in the life of the *Volk*." He goes on to note that the play is "anti-capitalist and anti-French, pro-community and pro-expansionist."[77] The last claim can be made due to the second scene in the play, where Paine and General Washington are studying a map of America. Looking at the unchartered Western lands, Paine says that this war is really about "Land! Land!! Washington! Earth…space, that's what we're fighting

---

[76] Hanns Johst, *Thomas Paine* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1927), 120.

[77] Glen Gadberry, "The History Plays of the Third Reich," in *Theatre Under the Nazis*, ed. John London, 102.

for…Fatherland!"[78] The notion of living space, or *Lebensraum*, for "real" Germans was already a part of the ideology of the political right, especially the Nazis. This, combined with the play's focus on one leader who sacrifices himself for the rebirth of his nation marks this as an overt Nazi play.

Thomas Paine premiered at the Staatstheater on November 16, 1935. The choice was an interesting one. The new Intendant was not a fan of overt propaganda plays, and resisted external pressure to produce more of them. He defended his choice on an artistic level, pointing out that modern National Socialist playwriting could not equal that of the classics, and calling the newer plays "closet-dramas" whose "form serves to hinder feeling."[79] Yet there were times when repertoire decisions were decided for Gründgens, usually coinciding with particular events or festivals. This was one of those times, as the production was planned as a part of the 1935 Congress of the Chamber of Culture to celebrate Johst's new position as president of the Literature Chamber. But according to reviews of the production, it was enormously successful. It seemed to transcend its strident political tones and reach non-Party members as well. Herbert Ihering, no fan of the current political regime, called it "the best Berlin production I have seen in 25 years."[80] According to reviews of the production, much of the credit for the success can be given to Lothar Müthel's performance as Paine and the direction of Jürgen Fehling.

Fehling had enjoyed a distinguished career during the Weimar Republic,

---

[78] Johst, *Thomas Paine*, 46.

[79] Gründgens, "Der Hund des Aubry," 78.

[80] Herbert Ihering, *Berliner Tageblatt*, November 18, 1935, reprinted in *Jürgen Fehling der Regisseur* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1978), 139.

directing the premieres of plays by Kaiser and Toller, playwrights banned by the Nazis. His Shakespearean productions had been condemned by Nazi critics as "cultural Bolshevism."[81] Yet he had also directed plays by Nazi approved playwrights such as Hermann Essig and Richard Billinger and had been praised for his *völkisch* productions by the same critics. He was also notoriously difficult to work with, ignoring rehearsal schedules, constantly improvising and re-improvising staging throughout the process and thereby foregoing a production book, and refusing to let the playwright see the production until opening night. But his talent was undeniable. When speaking of Fehling's work, actor Bernhard Minetti said that Fehling had an ability to "take weak plays and turn them into events." [82] In the case of *Thomas Paine*, he was universally praised in the reviews I examined.

Wolf Braumüller, writing in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, admired Fehling's skill, remarking that he "turned the melody into a symphony, not in the variety and richness of the instruments, but in their cooperation and juxtaposition."[83] The implication here is clearly that Fehling's directorial skill elevated the source material, material that Braumüller would have already appreciated as a Nazi critic. Walter Britting was a bit more restrained, writing that while each scene was not equally successful, the production was very effective as a whole.[84] Herbert Ihering was more

---

[81] William Grange, "Ordained Hands on the Altar of Art," 82.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Wolf Braumüller, "Hanns Johst: 'Thomas Paine' Festvorstellung anläßlich der Jahrestagung der Reichskulturkammer," *Völkischer Beobachter*, November 18, 1935, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[84] Walter Britting, "Hanns Johst: 'Thomas Paine' Erstaufführung im Stadttheater," no date, n.p: clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

laudatory, writing that Fehling had now reached a singular mastery of his craft, "composing individual scenes as if they were pieces of music."[85] Fehling was able to control the pace and flow of the performance, building up to that final transfiguration of man into myth.

The reviews did not focus as much on the acting of the production, generally singling out Lothar Müthel's portrayal of Paine for discussion. Walter Britting admired Müthel's restrained performance, noting that while "the flame of faith burned deeply in him, [it] only struck outward in crucial moments." Braumüller, again, was more effusive, describing the "devotion that shone from Müthel's eyes." Braumüller felt that Müthel was able to transfer "the poet's intuition onto the reality of the stage," an ability that Braumüller described as "an artistic gift." The enthusiastic nature of Braumüller's praise in the Nazi paper is informed by a National Socialist reading of Müthel's performance. It was not merely devotion that shone from his eyes; Braumüller goes on to exclaim that "the belief and *youth* [italics mine] of revolutionaries shone from his eyes." This specific focus on a revolutionary *young* man is particularly representative of heroic Nazi protagonists. It is clear from his comments that something in the performance, as well as the the play itself, spoke to Braumüller's National Socialist ideology.

It is the content of the play itself that makes up the bulk of the reviews, with most of the critics discussing why the play was relevant at this time. Otto Ernst Hesse states that while the play may be perceived as a history play, such a categorization is incorrect. For Hesse, the play is "political, not historical." Because

[85] Ihering reprinted in *Jürgen Fehling der Regisseur* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1978), 139.

the play's true aim is to be a political piece, any deviations from historical accuracy are excused by Hesse as unimportant. In Hesse's opinion, the political message takes precedent.

Hesse is not alone in this opinion. Walter Britting spends more than half of his review discussing the play itself and what it means for the modern German audience. For Britting, Paine's death by suicide is neatly glossed over. The manner of his death "remains insignificant, because his fate had already become a melody. His song lived in the people." According to Britting, Paine's death serves to highlight the real tragedy of the play, the tragedy "of the idealistic fighter who is broken by the resistance of the harsh world. He, however, retains faith in his ideas." Britting describes a distinctly Nazi world view, a world in which martyrdom for the cause is embraced, if not applauded. Paine has served as inspiration for his *people*. He sacrificed himself because he believed that his people, his *volk*, had lost faith in his ideals. Without the connection to his people, he had nothing. Britting clearly sees in the production a strong connection between Paine, his value system, and the people of his nation.

Wolf Braumüller's discussion of why this play should be produced now makes an even stronger, overt connection between Paine and National Socialist Germany. He is very taken with Johst's romantic take on manifest destiny, writing "only when Paine convinced Washington to take the revolution across the continent did the play become a manifestation of heroic theatre, binding the stage to the cultural will of our new state." For Braumüller, America's manifest destiny echoed the need for German *Lebensraum* (living space). In Paine, he finds a leader ennobled by a faith

that gives him "*völkisch* validity," just like the leaders of the Third Reich. He sees Paine's struggle against the views of the French, and later his own people, echoed in the current "revolution against stubborn human nature." One can only assume he is hinting at resistance to the Third Reich. Braumüller takes the metaphor even further. In his eyes, Paine's struggle had its counterpart in "our revolution around a new German culture, our revolution around the new German theatre." Suddenly, the play becomes a call to embrace Nazi playwriting and the theatre of this new era. Braumüller's comments serve to illustrate once again the high hopes committed National Socialists had for the theatre. It was a site of revolution, an important weapon in the battle for the hearts and minds of the German people.

Even the overwhelming masculinity of the production served as a reflection of Nazi ideology. Hesse, writing about the absence of women in the production, calls the play "a male piece, completely absent of any distraction from the work of men." This echoes Nazi gender stereotypes that relegated women to the private sphere, while men were concerned with the political and public sphere.

This production at the Staatstheater comes closer to Goebbels's call for a steely, romantic, heroic German theatre than any other to grace the stage at the Staatstheater. The play was not revolutionary in form, in fact it was very conventional. It was the language, the emotional rhetoric, the *manner* in which these ideas were presented, that came so close to Goebbels's description of what the Nazi theatre would look like. As Gadberry writes, "*Paine* is unashamedly rhetorical and theatrical, full of pathos and sentiment, and to use two specially favoured terms of the

time, it is 'militant' and 'manly.'"[86] But unlike other Nazi plays, which did not always work on the stage, the production at the Staatstheater was widely acclaimed. The cohesive, sophisticated production made a strong impression on those who saw it, even on Herbert Ihering. The production and its success gives credence to Göring's decision to focus on well-respected and talented artists over Nazi party ideologues.

Despite the success of *Thomas Paine*, more overt propaganda plays were not the norm during Gründgens's tenure as Intendant. As stated above, Gründgens was not a fan of Nazi playwriting. But this repertoire shift also reflected a shift within German society as well. As the Nazis moved from the gathering phase of the regime to the consolidating phase, the need to win over the population was replaced with a need to maintain the status quo.[87] In the following three seasons, the Staatstheater produced one Nazi play per season. Instead, the repertoire focused on Grundgens's beloved classical pieces.

It is easy to look at productions of overtly propagandistic plays and see how the theatrical aspirations of the Third Reich were successfully translated into actual production. But even the classical plays favored by Gründgens were being staged within a particular context. The question then becomes did these "apolitical" productions remain apolitical? As the regime matured and the need for overt, radical propaganda diminished, could the productions of classical works be perceived as a staging of the *Volk* as well?

---

[86] Glen Gadberry, "The History Plays of the Third Reich," 102.

[87] This shift is discussed in more detail in earlier chapters.

In January of 1936, the Staatstheater produced *Hamlet*, directed by Lothar Müthel and starring Gründgens as Hamlet. As I have discussed in earlier chapters, the Nazis quickly embraced Shakespeare regardless of his national origin, and spent a great deal of time and energy explaining why Shakespeare was really a kindred German spirit. *Hamlet* had a long German production history, with its most famous and respected actors taking on the title role. Elisabeth Schulz Hostetter writes that the play "encompassed much of what Germans felt intrinsically defined their sense of character and intellectual complexity."[88] Due to the massive success of the August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Dorothea Tieck translations of the play, many Germans saw *Hamlet* as a German play, or at least one that transcended Shakespeare's nationality and the Danish location to achieve a Germanic sensibility.

But that same intellectual complexity behind Hamlet's behavior presented particular challenges to National Socialist images of an active, heroic protagonist. Director and loyal National Socialist Lothar Müthel was certainly aware of these challenges, and set about creating a *Hamlet* that worked within a modern, National Socialist aesthetic. The reviews suggest that he was quite successful, although some first hand accounts question that success, particularly Gründgens's portrayal of the title character.

There seems to have been a general awareness amongst the critics reviewing the production that the play's legitimacy within the Third Reich needed to be addressed and reinforced. Most reviews spend a good deal of print space discussing why the play is an appropriate choice within a National Socialist repertoire. Not

[88] Hostetter, 147.

surprisingly, Herbert Ihering writes that the play's themes transcend nationality, noting that "*Hamlet* is the story of the tragedy and the triumph of the European spirit in the world."[89] K. H. Ruppel agrees, writing that "No second form of dramatic world literature so embodies the sovereignty of the western mind as Hamlet."[90] These comments do not mention the Aryan or German nature of the play, but by bringing attention to its transcendent nature, they remind readers that this is not an English play, but a western, European play. And as such, it can easily fit into the repertoire of a theatre in the Third Reich.

Most of the other reviews go out of their way to specifically place *Hamlet* within a German context. Hamlet is called "the Nordic man,"[91] and Shakespeare a "Northern poet."[92] K. F. writes that *Hamlet* is equal to *Faust* and *Wallenstein* in importance, and that the play is a "weighty chapter in the history of German literature as well as in the German theatre."[93] Goethe and Schiller were two of the Nazis' most revered German playwrights, and placing *Hamlet* in the company of these two plays makes a definite statement about its suitability within a National Socialist repertoire.

---

[89] Herbert Ihering, "Der 'Hamlet' des Staatstheaters/ Gustaf Gründgens in der Titelrolle," *Berliner Tageblatt*, January 21, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[90] K.H. Ruppel, "Hamlet. Neuinszeniert im Berliner Staatstheater," *Kölnische Zeitung*, January 25, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[91] Dr. E. K., "Shakespeare—und anderes 'Hamlet,'" *Deutsche Wochenschau*, January 30, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[92] Wolf Braumüller, "Im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt: Shakespeares 'Hamlet,'" *Völkischer Beobachter*, January 23, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[93] K. F., "Von Bühne. Hamlet; Staatstheater am Gendarmenmarkt," *Deutsches Wollen*, March 12, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

Productions from the recent past, specifically from the Weimar period, are vilified as "unGerman." The Hamlets of those productions were accused of being "repeatedly re-psychoanalyzed and lifted to a 'heroic ideal' of a decadent weak world."[94] Erik Krünes agrees, noting that the great tradition of young actors proving themselves with the role of Hamlet died with Joseph Kainz (who died in 1910).[95] The review in *Der Westen* reminds the reader of earlier, "problematic…modern" productions of *Hamlet*.[96] K. F. is even more specific, noting that the Staatstheater was honor bound to atone for the "blot on the German theatre" committed by an earlier *Hamlet* starring the Jewish actor Fritz Kortner. "One can hardly imagine a clearer artistic document of German disunity," writes K. F. These comments set up a beloved narrative of Nazi artistic criticism and history, a narrative in which the degenerate era of the Weimar Republic has been excised by the cultural achievements of the Third Reich, cultural achievements which restore Germany to its earlier artistic greatness.

The central factor in the transformation from the "problematic" *Hamlet* to the lauded production at the Staatstheater was Gustaf Gründgens's portrayal of the title role. Most reviews were incredibly positive, focusing on all of the new, modern, energetic qualities Gründgens brought to the part. Gründgens was the physical

---

[94] Braumüller.

[95] Erik Krünes, "Staatliches Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt…Von Garrick bis Gründgens: Ein neuer Hamlet, von Lothar Müthel inszeniert, und ein großer Theaterabend," *Nachtausgabe,* no date, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[96] Schmidt, "Der neue Hamlet. Lothar Müthels Neuinszenierung im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus," *Der Westen*, January 22, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

embodiment of an Aryan hero—blonde, blue-eyed, and young. In Gründgens's performance, any hesitation on Hamlet's part is not a sign of weakness, but of moral certitude. According to Otto Ernst Hesse, this Hamlet "is no longer melancholy or undecided, but an ethical, moral strategist who doesn't want to do what his uncle did: murder." Gründgens is hailed as "brilliant, clever, and crafty," who through his portrayal "performs an outrageous, elastic man instead of a gloomy melancholy one."[97] K. H. Ruppel also excuses Hamlet's hesitation, writing that Gründgens's hesistation and procrastination are not "the inhibition of human conscience…but the sophisticated tactics of a judge." Gründgens, who has thrown himself into the role "with all of the force of his imagination and all the fire of his temperament," is full of "ravishing vitality."[98] Florian Kienzl agrees that Gründgens's "young, slim, elegant" Hamlet avoids the typical characterization of Hamlet as fearful and weak.[99]

Gründgens's Hamlet was not all action and brawn. There was an undercurrent of intelligence to the production that was generally admired. K. H. Ruppel writes that Hamlet's jokes and "the aggressive fencing of his mind are Gründgens's starting points." Ludwig Sternaux agrees with this assessment, observing that "Gründgens comes at everything from the brain. [His actions are] deeply thought out, carefully calculated."[100] But he avoids the pitfalls of being merely an intellectual, a negative

---

[97] Otto Ernst Hesse, "Gustaf Gründgens und das Staatstheater-Ensemble begeistert gefeiert," *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, January 21, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[98] Ruppel.

[99] Florian Kienzl, " 'Hamlet' im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus," *Steiglitzer Anzeiger*, January 22, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[100] Ludwig Sternaux, "Gründgens' Prinz von Dänemark. 'Hamlet' im Staatlichen

characteristic for a proper *völkisch* hero. While his actions may be calculated and thought out, Gründgens acts "with so much spirit that …he always remains fascinating." Gründgens was able to translate that intelligence into action, so that "in his gestures you can see his thoughts, see them break and turn to another target."[101] Schmidt reconciles the dichotomy of intellectual and physical by noting that "This new Hamlet is a man full of healthy strength, healthy mind, and healthy passions, whose tragedy is that he must think." In this new, modern portrayal, the focus on Hamlet's physicality and action can excuse any thinking or overt intelligence that is also an integral part of his character. This logic allows Hamlet to remain a strong Aryan character.

The attempt to combine these traits were not appreciated by everyone. Klaus Mann's evaluation of Gründgens's Hamlet (written while Mann was in exile) as "a neurotic Prussian lieutenant" can hardly be considered reliable, since Mann's extreme dislike of Gründgens is well documented. But there were others who found that Gründgens's formal style and active, restless nature completely isolated his Hamlet from everything and everyone, even Horatio. Wilhelm Hortmann believes that the discomfort with Gründgens's performance stems from:

> the uncanny degree of consciousness with which Gründgens endowed the part. His Hamlet was not only a superb analyst of his own impulses and the moral state of the world, he was also fully aware that he was acting a part. …This created the frequently referred to freezing ambivalence or

---

Schauspielhaus," *Lokal-Anzeiger*, January 22, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[101] Frank Maraun, "Gustaf Gründgens spielt: Hamlet—als Held der Saga. Ein hinreißender Theaterabend am Gendarmenmarkt / Monumentaler Shakespeare / Spielleitung: Lothar Müthel," *Die blaüe Stünde*, January 22, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

Mephistophelian character of his presentation of the role.[102]

This is an interesting observation, and could reflect on similarities between Hamlet and Gründgens, who in his position as Intendant, was also acting a part in some respects. Even some of his critics went on to admit later in life that the political pressure to portray the role correctly (or roles, both as Hamlet and Intendant of the Staatstheater) and the tension that must have caused Gründgens may have led him to "over-control."[103]

These critiques were the minority. Frank Maraun called the performance the "greatest achievement of his life. Grüngens was previously regarded as an actor of intelligence and security that earned the audience's respect: with this performance he has won hearts." Erik Krünes, who had lamented that the tradition of great Hamlets died with Joseph Kainz, wrote that "one sees him [Gründgens] and is blinded…you are spellbound…and recognize a figure who, somehow, reminds one of Joseph Kainz." One critic wrote that his performance "will go down in history."[104] This kind of grand, overwhelming praise was far more common than negative criticism. With his performance, Gründgens created an interpretation of the character that could be embraced by the society in which he lived without betraying the text itself. As such, the performance, while clearly embodying traits endorsed by the Nazis, did not seem to pander to political forces.

---

[102] Wilhelm Hortmann, *Shakespeare on the German Stage. The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 159.

[103] Will Quadflieg, *Wir spielen immer* (Frankfurt: S. Fisher, 1976), 156.

[104] "Shakespeare: 'Hamlet' Neueinstudierung im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus," *Märkische Volks-Zeitung*, January 23, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

The supporting cast also was widely praised, especially Käthe Gold as Ophelia. Herbert Ihering wrote "I have never seen a mad scene so shocking in its poetry as I have seen from her." But although her mad scene was aggressive, it was in direct contrast to her physical appearance, described by Frank Maraun as "delicate, slightly pale frailty." Gold's acting was powerful, but her interpretation of the character does not seem to have broken any new ground. It did follow accepted National Socialist gender stereotypes both in terms of her physical appearance and her subservience to the men around her.

Lothar Müthel's direction was also praised. Frank Maraun approved of Müthel's vision, commenting "here a new style is found. A classic is reshaped, but not raped." This response echoes the feeling that while changes were made in the interpretation of the play, the text itself remained the starting point. The review in *Der Angriff* also observed that Müthel honored the text but was not afraid to put his own stamp on the production. According to the reviewer, the staging:

> felt urged towards internalization. There was not a sentence that was unexamined. But Müthel had the courage to fill the stage with movement. There is no pause, no declamatory tirades.[105]

Müthel was able to create a cohesive, unified performance, a feat labeled "monumental" and "unheard of" in the *Märkische Volks-Zeitung*.

One of Müthel's most significant contributions to the production was the conceptualization of Denmark. In the production, Denmark was an almost barbaric place, evocative of the Viking era. Herbert Ihering described the time of the play as

---

[105] Fzl, "Im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt, Die Sage von Hamlet, dem Dänenprinzen," *Der Angriff*, January 22, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

"raw" and "half-barbaric." Otto Ernst Hesse wrote that the scenery, designed by Rochus Gliese, was "archaic," and that "the halls of the palace barely exceed the dimensions of a log cabin." The ceilings of the palace are low, disappearing into strange corridors made of pillars of wood. The set was lit with pitch torches, and according to Ludwig Sternaux the guards wore costumes that appeared like "rough skins." To Sternaux, Elsinore felt like a "half-myth." This barbaric, far-away place was in direct contrast to Hamlet himself, dressed in sleek black. Most reviews comment on the juxtaposition of the backwards Elsinore and the modern Hamlet, and the reason given for this difference is Hamlet's time at the University of Wittenberg. Ihering writes that Wittenberg seems to be completely removed from the time and place of the rest of the play, an idea Otto Ernst Hesse also raises. K. H. Ruppel also comments on the distance between Elsinore and Wittenberg, not just physically but spiritually as well. Ruppel saw Elsinore as "the realm of drives and desires where Hamlet struggles with the gods for a spiritual and moral policy." The implication in the reviews is that Hamlet has been changed by his time in Wittenberg. Wittenberg, of course, is a German city. So, in effect, Hamlet has undergone positive change due to his time in Wittenberg. He is modern and vital, morally pure in contrast to the corrupt, backwards, and rough nature of Denmark. This corresponds to the idea that Hamlet is really a German hero, in spite of his actual nationality. Hamlet was shaped by his time in Wittenberg because spiritually, Hamlet is a German character.

There is no doubt that the production proved to be wildly popular. Between its premiere in 1936 and 1941, it had been performed almost 200 times, about a third

of all of the performances during that time.[106] The review in *Der Westen* called the production "one of those great memorable experiences in the history of German theatre," a sentiment echoed by the review in *Der Angriff* which claimed that the production had "set the Staatliches Schauspielhaus back at the top of German theatre culture." In light of such extreme praise, it would seem that at least one of the Nazis' aims, to reclaim German theatre and culture from its recent degenerate past, had been achieved. Elisabeth Hostetter contends that the production "expressed some readable elements of party politics and in some way supported and forwarded the conservative ideology."[107] The romanticized nature of Germany via Wittenberg, coupled with a strong, aggressive protagonist would seem to support this view. And Hostetter is also accurate when she acknowledges that due to the larger audiences, *Hamlet* may have subtly spread more propagandistic ideology and imagery than earlier, overt propaganda plays.

But evidence shows that not everyone saw the production as an endorsement of Nazi values and ideology. Gründgens was certainly aware of the expectations riding on his performance within the Nazi bureaucracy. Alfred Mühr, dramaturg at the Staatstheater, wrote about the toll the production took on Gründgens. He claimed that Gründgens suffered a nervous breakdown on opening night. Mühr wrote that Gründgens was acutely aware of how much Goebbels hated him, and was truly worried that an improper interpretation of the iconic prince could destroy him, regardless of Göring's protection. Mühr went on to elaborate that Gründgens knew

[106] Hortmann, 156.

[107] Hostetter, 154.

the Nazis expected:

> a proud swan on Danish (*read* German) waters, always active and raging forward. At best the character should avoid all doubts and be more goal-oriented than reflective and ambivalent. The alert, unambiguous will was supposed to triumph, not …the brother of Mephisto who might display fanatical attention to human feeling and problems.[108]

Gründgens clearly realized what was at stake. And that anxiety was not misplaced. Elisabeth Hostetter remarks that Gründgens's and Göring's enemies at the Chamber of Culture, specifically Alfred Rosenberg and Goebbels, hated the portrayal, and Glen Gadberry notes that the production was attacked for "conscious anti-fascism," although neither Hostetter or Gadberry goes into much detail.[109]

But Gerwin Strobl goes into significantly more detail about the danger Gründgens believed he was under and the stress this caused him. Four months after the production's opening night, an article appeared in the party paper *Völkischer Beobachter* which dealt with the "Nordic essence" of *Hamlet*. In the piece, Nazi journalist Waldemar Hartmann wrote that "only actors who act out their true heroic selves are fit for the part." Hartmann went on to say that it was unacceptable to portray Hamlet "in the tradition of Oscar Wilde's…Dorian Gray."[110] Although Gründgens is never mentioned by name, the bisexual actor, according to Strobl, clearly understood that the statement was a personal attack. Strobl believes that Gründgens saw the article as a threat to his career and his life, which is a highly

---

[108] Mühr, 320.

[109] Hostetter, 151. Glen Gadberry, "The Theatre in and of the Third Reich. The German Stage in [entitled] Extremis," in *Essays on 20th Century German Drama and Theater: An American Reception, 1977-1999*, ed. Hellmut Hal Rennert (N.Y.: Peter Lang, 2004), 137.

[110] Waldemar Hartmann, "Hamlets politisches Heldentum: Gedanken zum 'Hamlet,' als der Tragödie nordischen Verantwortungsgefühls," *Völkischer Beobachter*, May 3, 1936, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

plausible conclusion since Gründgens fled to Switzerland shortly after the publication of the article. According to Strobl, Gründgens was concerned about his parents' safety, and he informed Göring of his reasons via a letter to protect them. And here, we see how Göring placed his own ego and his role as "theatrical impresario" above his loyalty to party policy and politics. Göring convinced Gründgens to return to Berlin (noting that he could not protect Gründgens's parents from any fallout from his emigration), promising that he would be safe and that the writer responsible for the article had already been arrested (Gründgens pleaded for his release). Göring gave Gründgens protection from any other attacks by naming him Prussian State Councillor, a title that traditionally came with parliamentary immunity.[111] Gründgens was never again the subject of political attacks in the Nazi press.

So while there were many aspects of the production that did embrace and support Nazi ideology and a Nazi vision of Shakespeare and classic theatre, the political fallout and Göring's reaction to that fallout illustrates one of the largest weaknesses in Nazi theatrical policy. At least in the case of Göring and the Staatstheater, policy and ideology could take a backseat to ego and success.

Given this reality, it is not at all surprising that the single production on a mainstream stage that could be described as a protest of the Nazi regime happened at the Staatstheater in March, 1937. Because of this distinction, Jürgen Fehling's production of *Richard III* may be the most well-known production of the Nazi era.

There were many noteworthy or shocking elements of this production, the first of which was the use of space and Traugott Müller's set design. It clearly made a

[111] Strobl, 170-1.

strong impression on those who witnessed the performance, as it is mentioned in great detail in every review I encountered. It is the first thing discussed in several of those reviews. Herbert Ihering commented on the "endless depth of the stage" that was a "bare, gigantic rectangle."[112] This endless stage measured 144 feet from the apron to the back wall. A series of eight false proscenium arches progressing towards the back increased the feeling of depth. Walls were created by transparent scrims, always maintaining the feeling of a huge space.[113] The first of these proscenium arches was disguised with cloud-like formations that continued to increase until the Battle of Bosworth, when the sky appeared completely full of clouds.[114] Joachim Bremer noted in the *12 Uhr Blatt* that moveable stones would suggest a road, then a door to a castle, while benches would convey the meeting hall of the peerage.[115] The stage was raked, with the ceiling slanted upwards and the side walls becoming progressively narrower. The effect was described as disorienting, and created "the optical illusion of looking through an inverted telescope."[116] Paul Fechter of the *Berliner Tageblatt* wrote that it was the dominating memory of the five hour evening.[117] This kind of

---

[112] Herbert Ihering, "Zwei Regisseure, zwei Welten. Jürgen Fehling und Heinz Hilpert zum Gerburtstag," *Theatre Heute* (Hannover) 6, no. 3 (1965), reprinted in *Jürgen Fehling der Regisseur* , 152.

[113] Grange, "Ordained Hands on the Altar of Art," 86.

[114] Otto Ernst Hesse, " 'Kosmich gebändigtes Chaos.' Shakespeares 'Richard III' im Staatstheater," *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, March 3, 1937, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[115] Joachim Bremer, *12-Uhr-Blatt*, March 4, 1937, reprinted in *Jürgen Fehling der Regisseur*, 152.

[116] Karl H. Ruppel, *Großes Berliner Theater: Gründgens, Fehling, Müthel, Hilpert, Engel* (Velber bei Hannover: Erhard Friedrich, 1962), 12.

[117] Paul Fechter, *Berliner Tageblatt*, March 4, 1937, reprinted in *Jürgen Fehling der Regisseur*, 150.

abstract, suggestive set was highly unusual for the time. Hitler himself favored the elaborate, realistic sets that were the norm for the period. Before a word was even spoken, there was something markedly different about the production.

Both the lack of realistic sets and the telescoping effect put the focus of the play squarely on the actors themselves and Shakespeare's language. Ruppel writes that "every word, every step of the actor who faces this giant room gains importance."[118] Hesse notes that against this abstract set "the drama relies entirely on the word." Ihering's description is especially powerful: "Out of the words ascended the blood-soaked landscape of the battlefield, out of the words the Tower and the London streets where Richard met Queen Anne." Erik Krünes credits Fehling for staging the play in the spirit of Shakespeare, and allowing "the word to be more important than the scenery."[119] Given this focus on language, the performances, especially that of Werner Krauß in the title role, received a great deal of attention in the reviews.

Krauß was particularly effective and disturbing in the role of Richard. He first appears:

> a lonely man with a sword almost bigger than the shudder-rousing man himself, this creature with the wayward white blonde strands of hair around a pale face. Nothing lives behind this face but lies. …[He is] the personification of evil itself in the world. [120]

---

[118] Ibid.

[119] Erik Krünes, "Im Staatstheater am Gendarmenmarkt: Tyrann, Tartüff, Teufel. Shakespeares 'König Richard der Dritte,' neuinszeniert von Fehling," *Nachtausgabe*, no date, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[120] Dr. Carl Weichardt, "Tragödie der Herrschsucht. 'König Richard III.' im Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt," *Morgenpost*, no date, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

The six foot tall broadsword became his primary prop, and the 5' 7" Krauß would often lean on it, then stroke the hilt and shaft of the sword when discussing his plans for murder. The only time he really let the sword fall was when his own mother curses him. There is a clear phallic nature to the sword, and Richard's dependence on it makes a strong connection between Richard's lust for power and masculine sexual desire.

Other than the sword, the most notable facet of Krauß's performance was Richard's limp. While Richard is often portrayed as a hunchback, Krauß gave his Richard a limp. This choice was extremely shocking, because it was well-known that Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels limped due to his club foot. By giving Richard a limp, Fehling and Krauß were clearly tying the murderous actions of a tyrannical king to one of the most important political figures in the Third Reich and the architect of theatrical policy and propaganda. Krauß's limp was not a subtle choice that went unnoticed. According to an actor sitting near Göring at the premiere, Göring said "What is that Krauß doing? He is limping! What is that supposed to mean?"[121] The limp is mentioned in every review (although not surprisingly, the political implications are completely ignored) with the exception of the party paper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*. The absence of that detail in the party paper illustrates how politically shocking and dangerous the choice was, so incendiary that the journalists writing for the Goebbels managed paper ignored it altogether.

The complete package proved electrifying:

> [Werner Krauß] … deformed, limping, with an almost wildly flickering eye, often dragging his enormous sword, begins the murders at first with the

[121] Daiber, 245.

> precision of a mathematician. Then he begins to love controlling the game and he radiates a lust for power.[122]

It was that early precision, that coolness, that made Krauß so frightening. As Dr.Weichardt writes, "this evil is not a roaring hothead; a quiet, very subdued malice trickled poison into his body and the souls of all who, according to him, were within arm's reach of the crown." He jokes and laughs with the young princes and Hastings right before having them killed. This veneer of civilization over barbarism seems to make a veiled statement about the nature of those in power outside of the theatre, as well. The only review that was not enthusiastic about Krauß's performance was Dr. Willi Könitzer's piece in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, which called the performance strange and idiosyncratic, and at odds with the rest of the production. Again, these remarks are not surprising in light of the strong political nature of the paper. Given the restrictions on theatrical criticism, this review is as negative as a review could be. Far more prevalent was the opinion of Erik Krünes, who called the performance special and unique.

Although Hesse wrote that it was impossible to describe all of the highlights of "brilliant" production, there were aspects of the evening that were singled out in practically every review. The nightmare scene the night before the Battle of Bosworth was particularly shocking and effective. It was described as:

> the most dreadful, and at the same time most wonderful, scene that a director ever achieved. The death-mask appearances of the victims, the decaying bodies and their dance-like, morose behavior; these are images that will stick in the eye forever.[123]

---

[122] Hesse.

[123] Hesse.

The victims were brilliantly lit, their death wounds obvious, while Richard remained in the shadows.

The Scrivener's soliloquy also elicited a strong response. The Scrivener laments a society where an innocent man can be put to death for political reasons, delivering the speech downstage and directly to the audience. According to reports, audience reaction ranged from spontaneous applause to stunned silence.[124]

The costumes also made a political statement. Clarence's murderers wore brown shirts and jackboots, reminiscent of the S.A. Richard's bodyguards wore black uniforms similar to those of the S.S. Post-war discussions of the play mention the similarity to the uniforms of Nazi stormtroopers. At Richard's coronation, Krauß wore a white cape and a black gown. When he raised his arms to shake the hands of his supporters, he revealed the crimson lining of the cape. Thus, in an instant, the colors of the swastika were evoked in the minds of the audience.

The final scene was described as incredibly powerful. Richmond and Richard confront each other, alone on the huge stage. Richmond raised his sword, and Richard sank to the ground as if struck by lightning. Fehling cut the final scene so that the last words are Richmond's line "The day is ours; the bloody dog is dead." After a momentary blackout, the lights come up on a stage filled with Richmond's soldiers kneeling over the body, singing a Bach *Te deum* as the clouds which had been increasing throughout the play disappear.

The meaning is not subtle. Hesse describes the reaction of the audience as "spellbound," as does K. H. Ruppel. Post-war, Ruppel wrote that it was "one of the

[124] Hortmann, 139.

greatest performances the German theatre has ever seen."[125] Contemporary reviews echo Ruppel's sentiment, with Hesse commenting that the performance "adds a new wonder to the distinguished nature of the Staatstheater." Joachim Bremer wrote "It was one of the most interesting, valuable, and landmark productions that one has seen for a long time." But, as Wilhelm Hortmann argues, the political nature of the evening alone was not the reason for the production's great success; rather it was the combination of the explosive political context with the incredible artistic achievement of the cast, director, and designers that made the evening so memorable.

Göring was not impressed. He accused Fehling of cultural Bolshevism and demanded that Fehling be fired and the production pulled from the repertoire. Gründgens refused to fire Fehling. According to first hand accounts, Göring allegedly reacted to this by grabbing Gründgens by the neck, shoving him against a wall, and threatening to kill Fehling, to which Gründgens responded "Herr Minister President, if you dismiss Fehling I am no longer your Intendant."[126] Fehling stayed, and the production was kept in the repertoire for the rest of the season, with twenty one performances.

Why didn't Fehling end up in a concentration camp? On the one hand, Fehling could use the play itself as justification for the questionable production elements. Since Fehling did not really deviate from the script, he was able to turn to the text in defense and claim that any anti-regime statements were unintentional. On the other hand, Göring's need for theatrical supremacy seems to have trumped his

[125] Ruppel, *Großes Berliner Theater*, 15.

[126] Grange, 86.

dedication to Nazi principles. In this case, the fact that it was Göring's archenemy Goebbels who bore the brunt of the ridicule probably allowed Göring to ignore the matter rather than lose Gründgens. But in hindsight, the fact that Fehling and Gründgens escaped the episode with their lives intact is quite shocking. It also provides the perfect illustration of how fluid the adherence to official artistic policy could be at the Staatstheater.

The Staatstheater never again staged a production that questioned the regime. With the beginning of the war in September 1939, the production repertoire settled in to a pattern of German classics and Shakespeare with the occasional Greek tragedy and contemporary German play. In October 1941, during the middle of the war, the Staatstheater produced one of the most iconic German plays, and one that had put Gustaf Gründgens on the map in 1932—*Faust I*.

As Elisabeth Hostetter points out, when the Nazis came to power Goethe's *Faust I* had become a symbol of German intellectual and cultural achievement. She writes:

> Because it exemplified the poetic use of German language, the struggle for personal identity, the battle between mind and heart, and the intense search for knowledge, it represented the primary aesthetic example of German heritage, history, achievement, and personality.[127]

It is hardly surprising, then, that the Nazis repositioned Goethe and Faust as Aryan heroes. As Hostetter notes, the Nazis identified with Faust as a man who strove to "break out of deep frustration, a violent past, and social disappointments in order to acquire higher knowledge and ultimate success."[128] For the Nazis, *Faust* was the

[127] Hostetter, 133.

[128] Ibid.

pinnacle of German cultural achievement, and as such it was heavily produced during the Third Reich. At the Staatstheater, Gustaf Gründgens directed and starred in the 1941 production that would become "the most talked about show of the 1941/42 theater season."[129] There is nothing to suggest that Gründgens chose to produce *Faust* due to its current cultural cachet, but rather that he was committed to producing a textually faithful production of a great work. Nevertheless, there were production elements that can certainly be read as affirmations of Nazi stereotypes.

The production was 4 ½ hours, with very few deviations from the original script. He left in scenes that other directors, such as Hilpert at the Deutsches Theater, had cut completely, a decision greatly admired by critics like Richard Beidrzynski. Franz Köppen praised Gründgens for showing "the highest attention to the word."[130] Gründgens did omit some lines that could be viewed as controversial in the current political atmosphere, specifically those dealing with war or which might be construed as anti-government (Gründgens did not share Fehling's need to be politically provocative). But his dedication to the text was noted and admired by critics. In his review, Otto Ernst Hesse thanked Gründgens for his leadership in leading the production back to Goethe's source material.[131] The prevailing thought amongst the critics seemed to be that producing *Faust* was not like producing any other play. F.

---

[129] Richard Biedrzynski, *Schauspieler, Regisseure, Intendanten* (Heidelberg: Hüthig, 1944), 54.

[130] Franz Köppen, "Der Neue Staatstheater Faust mit Paul Hartmann und Gustav Gründgens," *Berliner-Bild Zeitung*, October 13, 1941, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[131] Otto Ernst Hesse, "Herrlich wie am ersten Tag… 'Faust, Erster Teil' im Staatstheater," *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, October 13, 1941, n.p; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

A. Dargel wrote that it was a huge responsibility to produce *Faust*, not just in the technical difficulties of staging the play, "but to Goethe's poetic testament." The director of the production bore a "responsibility to the spirit" of the play itself.[132] And there was also the feeling that the play's honor needed to be restored after earlier productions during the Weimar Republic. Florian Kienzl praised the "classical" production for erasing the memory of the "stylized versions" produced during the preceding time period.[133]

Gründgens was also praised for how he handled the depiction of the otherworldly aspects of the play. Hesse felt that he was very successful in stressing the metaphysical nature of the play, but Biedrzynski further clarifies that this did not mean the prevailing mood was unbelievable or dream-like. Rather, the stage "offers no hiding place for dreaminess." Instead, the "vicious, hostile" scenes between Faust and Mephisto took place in "fog-covered, large, nearly empty spaces." [134] This was in direct contrast to Faust's library, which was more realistic and looked, according to Biedrzynski, like a Rembrandt painting.

Modern technology was used to depict the Erdgeist, with a huge screen showing film of Bernhard Minetti reciting the Erdgeist's lines. Biedrzynski felt that

---

[132] F. A. Dargel, " 'Faust' im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus: 'Ein tiefer Blick in die Natur' Ergriffener Beifall dankt lange einem großen Abend," October 13, 1941, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[133] Florian Kienzl, "Ein bedeutender Gründgens: 'Faust erster Teil' im Staatstheater," *12-Uhr-Blatt*, October 13, 1941, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

[134] Dr. Richard Biedrzynski, "Faust—Der Tragödie erster Teil," October 13, 1941, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

"this technical intervention was made into a requisite of magic and enchantment."[135] The highly stylized choice was well received, primarily because it was not seen as a gimmick but as a functional response to an interesting production problem, mainly, how to make the Erdgeist seem other-worldly.

But aside from Gründgens's role as director, the most praise was reserved for the actors portraying Faust, Mephisto, and Gretchen. Paul Hartmann played Faust. Hostetter claims that Hartmann's portrayal of Faust was "more 'German' and solid" than Werner Krauß's "quiet, simple" Faust of 1931.[136] In examining the reviews, it is easy to see how she came to this conclusion. His Faust was no quiet intellectual, but "a Titan portrait of a rural leader," as Hesse describes him, whose "voice booms and roars and tears open all the depths of the suffering man." Dargel called Hartmann's Faust "powerful and fervent." Franz Köppen noted that Hartmann was able to transcend the merely intellectual nature of Faust, making "a wonderful transformation from thinker to lover. He found a synthesis between the two with the intelligent tone of a restrained wooer."

Biedrzynski made the connection between this characterization and a feeling of "German-ness" more explicit. Biedrzynski commented that Hartmann's Faust called to mind "the angry look" of Albrecht Dürer's etchings which many German Lutherans possess, and that from his first lines Hartmann was "energetic, boisterous, and angry. [He was] Faust with balled fists and not just a testy, sulky, tired humanist

---

[135] Richard Biedrzynski, *Schauspieler, Regisseure, Intendanten*, 55.

[136] Hostetter, 141.

but…like a reformer in the time of the German rural wars."[137]

It is clear from these descriptions that Hartmann's portrayal was a new, different Faust, with as much emphasis on action as on intellectualism (similar to Gründgens's earlier portrayal of Hamlet). His portrayal of a rural, strong professor who had worked hard for his position and was willing to do whatever was necessary to keep it can certainly be seen as an embodiment of Hitler's ideal Aryan man, and it is clear why Hostetter sees in his performance a conscious Germanic and Aryan quality. Whether or not that was Hartmann's or Gründgens's intention is unknown. But it is certainly plausible that audience members also felt they were watching the embodiment of the new German man.

In his discussion of the production, Paul Fechter wrote that "the poles of this tragedy are Gretchen and Mephisto: the tragedy of the fallen angel has a mirror image in the tragedy of the fallen girl."[138] The actor behind the fallen angel, Gründgens himself, stepped onto the stage of the Staatstheater with quite a bit of baggage due to his earlier portrayal of Mephisto in 1932. His earlier Mephisto was sarcastic and sexual, described by detractors as a "cabaret dandy." Critics and theatre-goers alike were curious as to what he would do with the part nine years later, and they were not disappointed.

The physical portrayal of the character was noticeably different. In the 1932 production, his Mephisto was visually striking with a shaved head, white make-up, darkened eyes and dark red lips. In the latter production, he simply looked like "a

---

[137] Richard Biedrzynski, "Faust—Der Tragödie erster Teil."

[138] Paul Fechter, "Gründgens' 'Faust' Staatstheater," no date, n.p.; clipping file, Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung, Freie Universität, Berlin.

gentleman dressed in human clothes, overpowering with cold scorn."[139] He no longer looked like a foppish demon, but to those who described the production there was something more frightening about the more physically understated, human form of the fallen angel.

His performance was characterized by Otto Ernst Hesse as "more mature, deeper and has become monumental. He springs with energy, vitality and wit." Instead of the dandy, there was something more insidious in the new Mephisto, a soullessness that was chilling to watch.

Hostetter claims that Gründgens looked more Jewish in the 1941 production, probably due to his long black robes and skullcap. But the connection is a tenuous one, he doesn't appear stereotypically Semitic looking in production photos, and there is no mention of the character's "Jewishness" in any review. They do often tie the words "intellectual" and "demonic" together, words which were often synonymous with Jews in the Third Reich. But whether or not any connection was intentional seems more like a charge made with twenty-twenty hindsight. Was it possible that Nazi loyalists saw Gründgens's performance and associated his Mephisto with the Jews? Of course, as I imagine Nazi loyalists acquainted most villains with enemies of the Reich. But if that connection was made, it seems to have been largely instigated by the viewer, not by the production itself.

On the other pole was Gretchen, played by Käthe Gold. What is most noticeable about her performance is how completely it aligned with accepted gender stereotypes put forth by the Nazis. Young, blonde and beautiful, a German farm girl

[139] Florian Kienzl, "Ein bedeutender Gründgens: 'Faust erster Teil' im Staatstheater."

who was completely subservient to the men around her. Hesse describes her "simplicity" and her "natural quality." Paul Fechter explicitly calls Gold a "Gretchen of the *Volk*. At first she is full of undisturbed simplicity and can barely understand that Faust makes such a strong impression on her." This subservient, naïve, young girl is the personification of German womanhood prescribed by Hitler, who believed that a woman only attained citizenship when she married.[140]

The premiere was met with silence, followed by rapturous applause. Biedrzynksi wrote that "only the first theatre of Europe could stage such a production."[141] Audience members felt that the production had honored and done justice to a play that was seen as a national treasure. The production was faithful to the text, but possessed a modern sensibility and was clearly influenced by modern stereotypes on acceptable gender roles in Nazi Germany. Elisabeth Hostetter points out that this production was especially welcomed in the midst of the war. The emphasis on a, if not *the*, German classic gave the audience a sense of pride in their accomplishments as Germans and allowed them to feel part of the larger, historical German community. While not a new, National Socialist authored play, there were elements of the performance that could certainly be co-opted by the regime as an emblem of everything the Germans were fighting for, without bringing undue negative attention on the realities of a society at war.

As the war continued, the Staatstheater had to make do with less financial support from the regime. There were coal shortages during the winter of 1940,

---

[140] Hitler, *Mein Kampf,* 441.

[141] Richard Biedrzynski, "Faust—Der Tragödie erster Teil."

forcing the closing of theatres for several weeks. Materials for building sets and costumes were rationed. In 1942, the Intendanten of the Reich theatres received a memo demanding the surrender of all metal items, other than busts of the Führer, to be used in the total war effort.[142] There was also an extreme shortage of people, as the backstage crew were drafted into the war effort. Then the actors were enlisted.

But while supplies and actors were dwindling, demand for the theatre was rising, and by 1943 people were lining up outside the box office overnight to get tickets. The air raids presented a danger, but no more so than staying in one's own house. At least the theatre provided an escape from the worsening reality outside.

As the war situation became more desperate, Hanns Johst and Hans Hinkel pushed for prominent actors and other figures of German culture to declare their allegiance to Hitler in their own words in a commemorative book.[143] Göring's power was losing its luster after the debacle at Stalingrad, and Gründgens became concerned that he could no longer rely on the protection of the Minister President. He asked a shocked Göring to allow him to enlist in 1943, expecting a desk assignment. Göring fulfilled his request, but sent his Intendant to the front lines to serve in an anti-aircraft artillery division, presumably to teach Gründgens a lesson.

Göring recalled Gründgens to his post at the Staatstheater in April, 1944. His final production at the Staatstheater was Schiller's *Die Räuber*. In stark contrast to the elaborate productions during the height of the regime, the play was performed on an empty stage with a dais covered in a black cloth. The actors sat on a row of chairs

[142] Strobl, 214.

[143] Ibid, 224.

behind the dais, stepping onto the dais for their entrances and returning to their seats for their exits, all in view of the audience. After the closure of the theatre for the total war effort in September 1944, Gründgens and the few remaining actors who were not drafted for the war effort would perform staged readings of repertoire classics three nights a week. By the time the Germans surrendered, the Staatstheater had been badly damaged, it lay in partial ruins, and had lost its roof. Göring had given Gründgens a gift of two vials of poison, but Gründgens did not commit suicide.[144] He was rehearsing *Die Räuber* in the remains of the Staatstheater when he was arrested by the Russians and sent to a Soviet internment camp for nine months.

After the war, artists and colleagues testified that Gründgens had saved their lives by warning them of Nazi raids he learned about at party meetings. He smuggled colleagues out of Germany, and secretly harbored Jews in the theatre throughout the regime. Gründgens himself claimed that he had used his position to fight the Nazis whenever possible from within their midst.

Gründgens's primary concern was artistic integrity, not politics. Writing about the director, Thomas Blubacher wrote "Gründgens understood theater as a holy space which had to be shielded from any influence from outside reality, so that theatrical art could serve the eternal values of beauty and truth."[145] He, like many others, claimed that he was simply trying to create art and remain apolitical.

But, as in my earlier examination of Heinz Hilpert, Blubacher's statement again raises intrinsic questions about remaining apolitical in the highly politicized

---

[144] Hostetter, 180.

[145] Thomas Blubacher, *Gustaf Gründgens* (Edition Colloquium im Wissenschaftsverlag Spiess: Berlin, 1999), 92.

society that was the Third Reich. Was such a thing possible? I argue that it was not. With the exception of *Richard III*, the prestige of the Staatstheater was used to elevate and glorify the Third Reich. Was the *Volk* staged at the Staatstheater? In the earlier years of the regime, German theatrical policies and aesthetics were explicitly staged at the Staatstheater in productions of *Schlageter* and *Thomas Paine*. When the repertoire shifted more heavily towards classics in 1936, there was a change in how the policies and ideologies of the regime were interpreted for the stage. In general, Gründgens did try and take a classical, text-based approach to the plays he performed and directed. But as Hostetter points out, Gründgens knew what was at stake, and would do what he had to do to keep himself and his company safe. It was this tight-rope walking act that was reflected in his portrayal of Hamlet, who like Gründgens, was always aware of the role he was playing.

There is certainly some debate over whether the active interpretations of Faust and Hamlet were deliberate concessions to Nazi images of appropriate protagonists, or whether societal influence was more subtle. But what is undeniable is that these lauded productions did contribute to Nazi propaganda efforts touting their theatres as the best in Europe, even if they were not the new theatrical forms the Nazis had originally intended.

Conclusion

The historian Roger Griffin, in his essay "Staging the Nation's Rebirth," writes, "Everything in the history of the two regimes [Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy] then, points to the gulf between Utopia and reality."[1] Because the "utopia" of Nazi Germany was never achieved in reality, it can be said that one of the only places the ideal Germany existed was in the imaginary world of the stage. But did it even exist there? Were the Nazis able to achieve their agenda in staging the *Volk* on the stages of Berlin?

At the beginning of my research, I wanted to examine the cultural ideology and policy of Nazi Germany and evaluate how (or if) that ideology was translated to the stage. But as I analyzed Nazi theatrical policy, it became clear that there was not a monolithic, fixed idea of what a National Socialist theatre should look like. There were some facets of cultural policy that were widely embraced, such as the removal of Jews, Communists, homosexuals, and other non-Aryans from theatrical life. And the creation of Nazi cultural policy did conform to what Igor Golomstock defines as "totalitarian art": (1) the declaration of art as an ideological weapon, (2) a State monopoly over "all manifestations of the country's artistic life," (3) the construction of a bureaucracy to control art, (4) and the attack on all styles and movements other than state-sanctioned ones, declaring them "to be reactionary and hostile to class,

[1] Roger Griffin, "Staging the Nation's Rebirth: Politics and Aesthetics of Performance in the Context of Fascist Studies," in *Fascism and Theatre, Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945*, ed. Günter Berghaus (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), 18.

race, people, Party of State, to humanity, to social or artistic progress, etc."[2] And there was consensus over common themes that should be espoused by National Socialist theatre, such as a glorification of German history and mythology, a respect for authority, devotion to a strong military leader, and strong ideals of both German masculinity and femininity. But ideas about the form the Nazi theatre should take were fluid and hotly contested. The Nazi vision of a theatre varied wildly depending on the Party faction developing policy and the historical moment within the regime. Whether or not that vision was enforced was often dependent on the personal ambition of Nazi bureaucrats themselves. It is not surprising then, as Gerwin Strobl eloquently states in his work, that the chaotic nature of Nazi cultural policy itself was mirrored on the stages of Berlin.[3]

The obligation to stage the *Volk* was greeted very differently by the Theater des Volkes, the Deutsches Theater, and the Berliner Staatstheater. The Theater des Volkes, of the three, offers the clearest example of a theatre attempting to conform to Nazi ideology. This is not surprising, given the Theater des Volkes' connection to the Strength through Joy movement. The theatre's role was to offer the highest expression of German theatre to the working classes at a very low cost. And in that vein, the repertoire selections of the Theater des Volkes reflect the evolution of National Socialist theatrical policy: German classics by playwrights such as Schiller, Shakespearean comedies, and the mythic *Thingspiel.* But as war escalated, the more

[2] Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China*. Trans. Robert Chandler (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), xii.

[3] Gerwin Strobl, *The Swastika and the Stage. German Theatre and Society, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

classic-based repertoire was replaced with escapist light operettas presenting audience members with fantasies of the German countryside. These operettas were not the heroic propaganda pieces described by early Nazi ideologues, but in their own way they fulfilled the cultural mission of the Nazi Party. German stereotypes were embraced (such as farm girls with braided blonde hair wearing *dirndls*), the German countryside was glorified, and the unpleasant realities of the war could be avoided. They were not overtly political works like Hanns Johst's *Thomas Paine* or *Schlageter*, but they served an equally important political purpose: keeping the population entertained and focused on the fantasy of the Third Reich rather than the reality of living in a war-torn country.

The relationships between the state and the Deutsches Theater and the Berliner Staatstheater were much more complicated. There are clear examples of each theatre attempting to follow Nazi ideology and cultural policy. The early years of the Deutches Theater under Nazi rule were marked by a string of plays by National Socialist playwrights, although none of them were particularly successful or critically well-received. It was Joseph Goebbels's need for artistic legitimacy that led to the hiring of Heinz Hilpert. With Hilpert as Intendant, the Deutsches Theater shifted focus from political propaganda plays to the classics, such as Schiller and Shakespeare, and modern playwrights like George Bernard Shaw. The same trajectory is evident at the Berliner Staatstheater. The early years of the regime saw successful performances of the two most iconic Nazi plays, the aforementioned *Schlageter* and *Thomas Paine*. But when Hermann Göring hired Gustaf Gründgens in order to outshine the Deutsches Theater, the repertoire shifted to the classics, as

well as comedies in the style of the well-made play.

But this shift cannot merely be explained by the willingness of Goebbels and Göring to look the other way when Hilpert and Gründgens showed no interest in staging overt political works. As the regime became more entrenched, this kind of radical playwriting fell out of favor for a more conservative focus on cultural legitimacy. The shifting repertoires of the Deutsches Theater and the Berliner Staatstheater simply mirrored the shift in theatrical policy itself.

The lack of severe consequences to the rare overt challenges to the Nazi regime, however, can only be explained by the intense rivalry of Goebbels and Göring. It is in these few instances that the Nazi vision of the *Volk* was challenged by these two theatres, both onstage and off. There are numerous stories of Jews being hidden in both theatres, and Gründgens's homosexuality was not a secret. He was given protection by Göring, as long as he produced consistently excellent theatre. Nazi ideologues certainly felt that the Deutsches Theater and the Berliner Staatstheater were not successful in carrying out a unified vision of the *Volk*. There was the case of the Hauptmann programs, insulting the Thousand Year Reich by claiming that Hauptmann's work would last long after the audience had turned to dust. At the Berliner Staatstheater, Jürgen Fehling often challenged the heroic nature of the *Volk*. There were complaints about his unheroic interpretations of Hebbel's *Nibelungen* and Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans*. Those were nothing compared to his production of *Richard III*, in which the evil Richard sports a clubfoot (like Goebbels) and his armies appear in costumes very similar to the uniforms of the S.S. Yet neither Hilpert, Gründgens, or Fehling were put into concentration camps. The

only reason they were able to flout Nazi policy was because Goebbels and Göring wanted them to remain in their positions at their respective theatres, in direct contravention of Nazi cultural policy.

Yet most actors and directors after the war claimed that there main goal was, in fact, to remain a-political, to focus on art for art's sake. It is clear that the majority of productions staged at the Deutsches Theater and the Berliner Staatstheater under Hilpert and Gründgens tried to do just that; create quality theatre that did not attempt to stage the *Volk*, but rather tried to wrestle the stage away from the political arena. I argue, however, that this was simply not possible. Even though they were not staging Nazi ideology, the programs they handed out every night prominently featured the Swastika. As William Grange points out, "Many directors believed they could stay and remain 'unpolitical.' But that had political consequences."[4] Their work was appropriated by the Nazis, held up to the world as an example of the apex of German culture under the Third Reich. Whether they intended to support the regime or not, as long as they performed in a Nazi playhouse, they were making Nazi art (even if the Nazi ideologues themselves disagreed).

Gründgens was certainly aware that the productions on stage could only be viewed in the context of the world outside of the theatre:

> Whether he wants it or not, whether he believes it or not, whether he knows it or not: Each artist creates his artwork in relationship to the time in which he lives and works, because no distant artistic galaxy exists that can help inspire the brilliant spontaneous conception of ideas.[5]

---

[4] William Grange, "Ordained Hands on the Altar of Art: Gründgens, Hilpert and Fehling in Berlin" in *Theatre in the Third Reich, The Prewar Years: Essays on Theatre in Nazi Germany*, ed. Glen W. Gadberry (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 80.

[5] Gustaf Gründgens, "Regie, 1937," 46.

The relationship was not, however, a one-way street. The world in which he lived served as inspiration for Gründgens. But as he himself pointed out, theatre does not occur in a vacuum. If you make concessions to a totalitarian regime, if you achieve fame and fortune and artistic success while doing so, can you truly claim to produce a-political work?

Actor Bernhard Minetti, in hindsight, acknowledged the complicated nature of trying to remain a-political in an overtly politicized society:

> I didn't look. I closed my eyes, knowing what Hitler signified. I did nothing against it. Perhaps I was a coward. These are questions of conscience. I see through the evil of the world. I also saw through National Socialism. I am not stupid and insensitive. But I learned to maintain my distance. I developed the ability to close myself off out of self-protection. My existence is my life in theater. To be an actor is my drive, my necessity. I had to keep myself alive in the service of literature, as its enacter. Theater was my salvation and has been so up until this day.[6]

Minetti hints at the human consequences of compromising with the regime. In order to serve the theatre and stay in the country as an actor, he ignored the disappearance of his colleagues in the service of a National Socialist cultural policy.

It is clear that the Nazis had grand, powerful ideas of what the theatre of the Third Reich could and should accomplish. It is also clear that these goals were not always successfully staged in the theatres of the Theater des Volkes, the Deutsches Theater, and the Berliner Staatstheater. At specific moments during the Third Reich, these theatres did reflect Nazi cultural policy and attempted to stage the *Volk*. At other times, they did not. But with the exception of a few instances of overt resistance, they were always connected to the ideology of the Third Reich, regardless

[6] Bernhard Minetti, " 'Ja, nichts sonst.' André Müller spricht mit dem Schauspieler Bernhard Minetti," *Die Ziet*, July 9, 1993, p. 13.

of their intention.

Bibliography

This bibliography is divided into two sections: primary and secondary sources. Many of the newspaper reviews were read in cutting files in Berlin at the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft Kritikenabteilung at the Freie Universität, the Akademie der Künste, the archives of the Deutsches Theater, and the Stadtmuseum Berlin--Landmuseum für Kultur und Geschichte Berlins, and are so identified in the footnotes to each chapter.

Primary Sources

"Berlin feiert Paul Lincke (Frau Luna)." 7 November 1941, n.p.

Biedrzynski, Richard. "Im Deutschen Theater. Tragödie des Einsamen. Hanns Johst Grabbedrama mit Theodor Loos in der Hauptrolle." n.d., n.p.

———. "Faust—Der Tragödie erster Teil," 13 October 1941, n.p.

———. "Nachspiel zum 'Othello': 'Das Wintermärchen' von Heinz Hilpert neu inszeniert im Deutsches Theater." *Völkischer Beobachter*, May 1944, n.p.

———. *Schauspieler, Regisseure, Intendanten.* Heidelberg: Hüthig, 1944.

Braumüller, Wolf. "Hanns Johst: 'Thomas Paine' Festvorstellung anläßlich der Jahrestagung der Reichskulturkammer." *Völkischer Beobachter*, 18 November 1935, n.p.

———. "Im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt: Shakespeares

‘Hamlet.’” *Völkischer Beobachter*, 23 January 1936, n.p.

Bremer, Joachim. *12-Uhr-Blatt*, 4 March 1937. Reprinted in *Jürgen Fehling der Regisseur*. Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1978: 151-152.

Britting, Walter. “Hanns Johst: ‘Thomas Paine’ Erstaufführung im Stadttheater.” n.d., n.p.

Brunhuber, Ludwig. “ ‘Das Wintermärchen’ Erstaufführung im Deutschen Theater.” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 30 April 1944, n.p.

C.R. “*Wilhelm Tell*: Im Deutschen Theater.” *12-Uhr-Blatt*, 6 May 1933, n.p.

“Culture Chamber Ousts Jews.” *New York Times*, 4 September 1935, 14.

Dargel, Felix A. “Der Beste soll herrschen! ‘Coriolan’ im Deutschen Theater.” 26 March 1937, n.p.

———. “ ‘Faust’ im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus: ‘Ein tiefer Blick in die Natur’ Ergriffener Beifall dankt lange einem großen Abend.” 13 October 1941, n.p.

“Das deutsche Theater im neuen Reich. Reichminister Dr. Goebbels vor den Mitgleider des Deutschen Bühnenvereins.” *Der völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), 1 June 1934, 2.

Dietzenschmidt, A.F. “Klassische Tragödie und moderne Komödie im Deutschen Theater und in der Komischen Oper.” *Berliner Tageblatt*, 26 Jan. 1937, n.p.

“Deutsche Passion 1933—Richard Euringers Werk im Theater des Volkes.” n.d., n.p.

Fechter, Paul. “Gründgens’ ‘Faust’ Staatstheater.” n.d., n.p.

———. “Shakespeares ‘Coriolan’/Neueinstudierung im Deutsches Theater.” 27 March 1937, n.p.

———. “Shakespeares ‘Wintermärchen’ Deutsches Theater.” *Deutsche Allgemeine*

Zeitung, 29 April 1944, n.p.

Fehling, Jürgen. *Die Magie des Theaters*. Hannover: Friedrich, 1965.

Flemming, Hans. 'Schlageter': Staatstheater." 21 April 1933, n.p.

Friedrichs, Axel, ed. *Die Nationalsozialistiche Revolution 1933.* 3rd ed. Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1938.

Fzl. "Im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt, Die Sage von Hamlet, dem Dänenprinzen." *Der Angriff*, 22 January 1936, n.p.

Goebbels, Joseph. "Freiheit des dichterischen Schaffens: Ein Brief des Reichministers Dr. Joseph Goebbels." Reprinted in *Der Autor* 9 (January 1934): 2.

———. *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: sämtliche Fragmente,* Teil I: *Aufzeichnungen 1924-1941*. 4 vols. Edited by Elke Fröhlich. Munich: K.G. Saur, 1987.

Götke, Franz. "Ein Menschenuntergang. 'Der Einsame' von Hanns Johst mit Theodor Loos im Deutschen Theater." 24 May 1941, n.p.

"Gottes Freund und der Pfaffen Feind. 'Der tolle Christian' gelangt heute im Deutschen Theater zur Aufführung." n.d., n.p.

Gründgens, Gustaf. "Der Hund des Aubry." *Gustaf Gründgens: Wirklichkeit des Theaters*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963): 73-4.

Hamel, Fred. "Rehabilitierung der Operette. Edmund Nick: 'Über alles siegt die Liebe'—Theater des Volkes." 2 October 1940, n.p.

Hartmann, Waldemar. "Hamlets politisches Heldentum: Gedanken zum 'Hamlet,' als der Tragödie nordischen Verantwortungsgefühls." *Völkischer Beobachter*,

3 May 1936, n.p.

Heiber, Helmut, ed. *Goebbels-Reden. Band 1: 1932-1939.* Düsseldorf: Droste, 1971.

Hesse, Otto Ernst. "Gustaf Gründgens und das Staatstheater-Ensemble begeistert gefeiert." *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, 21 January 1936, n.p.

———. "Hanns Johsts *Schlageter*: Uraufführung im Staatstheater." *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag,* 21 April 1933, n.p.

———. "Herrlich wie am ersten Tag… 'Faust, Erster Teil' im Staatstheater." *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, 13 October 1941, n.p.

———. " 'Kosmich gebändigtes Chaos.' Shakespeares 'Richard III' im Staatstheater." *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag,* 3 March 1937, n.p.

———. "Luise Ullirch in der Schiller-Tragödie Deutsches Theater." *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag,* 26 January 1937, n.p.

Hilpert, Heinz. *Formen des Theaters. Reden und Aufsätze.* Vienna: Alfred Ibach Verlag, 1943.

Hitler, Adolf. *Hitler's Secret Conversations, 1941-1944.* Trans. Norman Cameron and R.H. Stevens. NY: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1955.

———. *Mein Kampf.* Trans. Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971.

———. *Speeches and Proclamations, 1932-1945*. Ed. Max Domarus. Wauconia, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1989.

Horn, Walter. "Genie Ohne Volk. Heute im Deutschen Theater: 'Der Einsame' von Hanns Johst." 24 May 1941, n.p.

" '100 Tage' Staatstheater." *Berliner Tageblatt*, 16 February 1934, n.p.

Ihering, Herbert. "Der 'Hamlet' des Staatstheaters/ Gustaf Gründgens in der Titelrolle." *Berliner Tageblatt*, 21 January 1936, n.p.

———. *Regie*. Berlin: Hugo, 1943.

———. "Staatliches Schauspielhaus: 'Schlageter.'" *Börsen-Courier*, 21 April 1933, n.p.

———. "Wieder Deutsches Theater. Eroffnung mit 'Wie es Euch gefällt.'" *Berliner Tageblatt*, 12 Sept. 1934, n.p.

Johst, Hanns. *Schlageter: Schauspiel*. Munich: Albert Langen/Georg Müller, 1933.

" 'Kampf durch Freude!' Die große Kundgebung der Deutschen Arbeitsfront." *Der völkische Beobachter* (Berlin), 16/17/18 April 1933: 1.

K.F. "Von Bühne. Hamlet; Staatstheater am Gendarmenmarkt." *Deutsches Wollen*, 12 March 1936, n.p.

Keienburg, Ernst. "Tausende werden eine Einheit: Euringer's 'Deutsche Passion' im Theater des Volkes." 20 April 1935, n.p.

Kersten, Paul. "Berauscht von so viel Schönheit. 'Das Wintermärchen' mit der Dorsch und Balser im Deutschen Theater." *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 29 April 1944, n.p.

Kienzl, Florian. "Ein bedeutender Gründgens: 'Faust erster Teil' im Staatstheater." *12-Uhr-Blatt*, 13 October 1941, n.p.

———. " 'Hamlet' im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus." *Steiglitzer Anzeiger*, 22 January 1936, n.p.

———. "Shakespeares alte-neue Gestalt. Das Wintermärchen mit Käthe Dorsch im

Deutschen Theater." *12 Uhr-Blatt*, 29 April 1944, n.p.

———. "Shakespeares Volksfeind/ 'Coriolan' im Deutschen Theater." *12 Uhr Blatt*, 30 March 1937, n.p.

Klaiber, Joachim. "Politischer Shakespeare. 'Coriolan' im Deutschen Theater—Titelrolle: Ewald Balser." *Der Angriff*, 27 March 1937, n.p.

Kluge, Kurt. *Das Ewige Volk.* Berlin: Propylaen, 1933.

Köppen, Franz. " Heubergers 'Entzückende Frau' Eine Neubearbeitung im Theater des Volkes." 8 October 1940, n.p.

———. "Der Neue Staatstheater Faust mit Paul Hartmann und Gustav Gründgens." *Berliner-Bild Zeitung*, 13 October 1941, n.p.

———. "Shakespeares 'Coriolan' im Deutschen Theater." n.d., n.p.

Krafft, Erich. "DieTragödie Schlageters: Uraufführung im Staatstheater." 21 April 1933, n.p.

Krünes, Erik. "Im Deutschen Theater Luise Ullrich als 'Jungfrau' Schillers romantische Tragödie, neueinstudiert von Heinz Hilpert." *Nachtausgabe,* Jan. 1937, n.p.

———. "Der Mann, der siegen und sterben mußte. Shakespeares 'Coriolan,' neu inszeniert und bearbeitet von Erich Engel—In der Titelrolle Ewald Balser." 27 March 1937, n.p.

———. "Shakespeare—und anderes 'Hamlet.'" *Deutsche Wochenschau*, 30 January 1936, n.p

———. "Staatliches Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt…Von Garrick bis Gründgens: Ein neuer Hamlet, von Lothar Müthel inszeniert, und ein großer

Theaterabend." *Nachtausgabe,* n.d., n.p.

———. "Im Staatstheater am Gendarmenmarkt: Tyrann, Tartüff, Teufel. Shakespeares 'König Richard der Dritte,' neuinszeniert von Fehling." *Nachtausgabe,* n.d., n.p.

Künkler, Karl. " 'Peer Gynt" im Theater des Volkes." n.d., n.p.

Lichberg, Heinz von. "Eröffnung des Theaters der Nation in Berlin: 'Die Räuber' im Großen Schauspielhaus." *Der völkische Beobachter* (Berlin), 20 January 1934: 9.

Mann, Günter. "Shakespeare im Deutschen Theater. Ewald Balser als 'Coriolan.'" n.d., n.p.

Mann, Klaus. *Mephisto*. Trans. Robin Smyth. New York: Random House, 1979.

Maraun, Frank. "Gustaf Gründgens spielt: Hamlet—als Held der Saga. Ein hinreißender Theaterabend am Gendarmenmarkt / Monumentaler Shakespeare/ Spielleitung: Lothar Müthel." *Die blaüe Stünde*, 22 January 1936, n.p.

M.E. "Johsts "Schlageter': Hitler-Feier im Staatstheater." 21 April 1933, n.p.

Müller-Marein, Jupp. "Bilderbuch vom kleinen Glück: 'Himmelblaue Träume' im Theater des Volkes." *Berlin Lokalanzeiger,* 11 September 1938, n.p.

Naujoks, Erich. "Die lächelnde Jungfrau. Luise Ullrich als 'Jungfrau von Orleans' Deutsches Theater." *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 5 Jan. 1937, n.p.

" Nazis Order Jews Ousted from Stage." *New York Times*, 6 March 1934: 28.

"In den neuen Reich—Euringers 'Deutsche Passion 1933' im Theater des Volkes." 20 April 1935, n.p.

Paulsen, Harald. "Sommernachtstraum im Theater des Volkes." *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), 18 September 1934, 5.

" 'Peer Gynt' Theater des Volkes." 5 March 1936, n.p.

Pfeiffer, Herbert. "Hilpert eröffnet das Deutsches Theater 'Wie es Euch gefällt.'" 12 Sept. 1934, n.p.

———. "Eine Sommernachtstraum-Revue." *12-Uhr-Blatt* (Berlin), 17 Sept. 1934, n.p.

———. "Wallenstein." *12-Uhr-Blatt* (Berlin), 12 Nov. 1934, n.p.

Prilipp, Beda. "Rokokolyrik und Grenadiermarsch. 'Über alles siegt die Liebe' im Theater des Volkes." 2 October 1940, n.p.

P.W., "Hilpert spielt 'Wie es Euch gefällt.' Erster Abend der neuer Direktion im Deutschen Theater." *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*. 12 Sept. 1934, n.p.

Reidel, Richard. "Mussolins Napoleon-Drama. '100 Tage' im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus." 15 February 1934, n.p.

Reinhardt, Max. *Max Reinhardt Schriften*. Edited by Hugo Fetting. Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1974.

"Richard Euringers Thingspiel im Großen Schauspielhaus: 'Deutsche Passion 1933' Triumph der namenlosen Spieler—Chöre aus 14 Berliner Großbetrieben." 20 April 1935, n.p.

Ruppel, Karl H. *Großes Berliner Theater: Gründgens, Fehling, Müthel, Hilpert, Engel*. Hannover: Friedrich Verlag, 1962.

———. "Hamlet. Neuinszeniert im Berliner Staatstheater." *Kölnische Zeitung*, 25 January 1936, n.p.

"Die Schiller-Gedenkrede des Reichsministers Dr. Goebbels." *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), 13 November 1934, 6.

Schmidt, "Der neue Hamlet. Lothar Müthels Neuinszenierung im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus." *Der Westen*, 22 January 1936, n.p.

Schultze, Gerhard. " 'Über alles siegt die Liebe': historische Operette im Theater des Volkes." *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), 2 October 1940, n.p.

"Shakespeare: 'Hamlet' Neueinstudierung im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus." *Märkische Volks-Zeitung*, 23 January 1936, n.p.

Stege, Fritz. "Die Bühnenmusik." *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), 18 September 1934, 5.

Sternaux, Ludwig. "Gründgens' Prinz von Dänemark. 'Hamlet' im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus." *Lokal-Anzeiger*, 22 January 1936, n.p..

———. "Shakespeare in Rokoko-Kostüm. Deutsches Theater: 'Wie es euch gefällt.'" Sept. 1934, n.p.

Trask, Claire. "*Richard III* Adorns a Berlin Stage." *New York Times*, 7 May 1937: n.p.

von Lichberg, Heinz. "Die Räuber" im Großen Schauspielhaus." *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), n.d., n.p.

"Die Wallenstein-Trilogie: Schiller-Ehrung im Theater des Volkes." *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin), 13 November 1934, 5.

Weichardt, Carl. "Hundert Tage" Erstaufführung im Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt." n.d., n.p.

———. "Johsts 'Schlageter' im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus." *Berliner Morgenpost*,

21 April 1933, n.p.

———. "Das neue Deutsche Theater. Eröffnungs-Vorstellung: 'Wie es euch gefällt.'" *Berliner Morgenpost,* Sept. 1934, n.p.

———. "Tragödie der Herrschsucht. 'König Richard III.' im Schauspielhaus am Gendarmenmarkt." *Morgenpost,* n.d., n.p.

Weinschenk, H.E. "Neue Operette im Theater des Volkes. 'Über alles siegt die Liebe': Die Zeit des Soldatenkönigs wird auf der Bühne lebendig." n.d., n.p.

Werner, Bruno E. "Agnes Bernauer." 18 October 1940, n.p.

———. "Billinger: *Stille Gäste.*" *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung,* 6 April 1934, n.p.

———. "Shakespeares Volksfeind. 'Coriolan'—Deutsches Theater." *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung,* 26 March 1937, n.p.

———. "Theodor Haerten: 'Der tolle Christian' Deutsches Theater." *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung,* 27 March 1936, n.p.

Westecker, Wilhelm. "Das Seelerdrama eines Genies. Hanns Johsts 'Der Einsame' im Deutschen Theater." 24 May 1941, n.p.

Wie es Euch gefällt. Program notes, Deutsches Theater Archive.

Wilde, Richard. "Die grossen Berliner Theaterkrisen." *Der Autor* 8 (January 1933): 1.

W. R., " 'Schlageter': Schauspiel von Hanns Johst im Staatlichen Schauspielhaus." *Berliner Morgenpost,* 21 April 21 1933, n.p.

Wulf, Josef, ed. *Theater und Film im Dritten Reich; Eine Dokumentation*. Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn, 1964.

Zimmerman, Felix. "Gereinigt, erneuert und erweitert." Reprinted in *Theater und*

Film im Dritten Reich; Eine Dokumentation, ed. Josph Wulf (Gütersloh: Sigbert Mohn, 1964), 34-5.

Secondary Sources

Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992.

Barron, Stephanie, ed. *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991.

Bahr, Erhard. "Nazi Cultural Politics: Intentionalism vs. Functionalism." In *National Socialist Cultural Policy*, ed. Glenn R. Cuomo, 5-22. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Bartetzko, Dieter. *Zwischen Zucht und Ekstase; zur Theatralik von NS-Architectur.* Berlin: Mann Verlag, 1985.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Era of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

Berghaus, Günter, ed. *Fascism and Theatre: Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945*. Providence, RI: Berghann, 1996.

Bleuel, Hans-Peter. *Strength Through Joy*. Trans. Maxwell Brownjohn. London: Secker and Warburg, 1973.

Blubacher, Thomas. *Gustaf Gründgens.* Berlin: Wissenschaftsverlag Spiess, 1999.

Carlson, Marvin. *The German Stage in the Nineteenth Century.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1972.

Chandler, Albert R. *Rosenberg's Nazi Myth*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1945.

Daiber, Hans. *Schaufenster der Diktatur: Theater im Machtbereich Hitlers.* Stuttgart: Günther Neske Verlag, 1995.

Davies, Cecil. *The Volksbühne Movement: A History*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000.

Eichberg, Henning. "The Nazi *Thingspiel*: Theater for the Masses in Fascism and Proletarian Culture." *New German Critique* 11 (Spring 1977): 133-150.

Dillmann, Michael. *Heinz Hilpert: Leben und Werk.* Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1990.

Drewniak, Boguslaw. "The Foundations of Theater Policy in Nazi Germany." Trans. Glenn R. Cuomo. In *National Socialist Cultural Policy,* ed. Glenn R. Cuomo, 67-94. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

———. *Das Theater im NS-Staat: Szenarium deutscher Zeitgeschichte, 1933-1945*. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1983.

Eatwell, Roger. *Fascism: A History.* London: Vintage Press, 1996.

Fest, Joachim C. *The Face of the Third Reich: Portraits of the Nazi Leadership*. Trans. Michael Bullock. London: Weidenfeld, 1963.

Gadberry, Glen W. "An 'Ancient' German Rediscovered—History as Hero of Third Reich Theatre Policy." *Text and Presentation* 12 (1992): 29-34.

———. "The Black Medeas of Weimar and Nazi Berlin: Jahnn-Straub and Straub-Grillparzer." *Theatre Survey* 33, no. 2 (November 1992): 154-169.

———. "Dramatic Contraries: The Paine Histories of Hanns Johst and Howard Fast." *Text and Presentation* 9 (1989): 61-72.

———. "The First National Socialist Theatre Festival—Dresden 1934." In *Theatre in the Third Reich, the Prewar Years*, ed. Glen W. Gadberry, 121-140. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995.

———. "The History Plays of the Third Reich." In *Theatre Under the Nazis*, ed. John London, 96-135. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000.

———. "Introduction: The Year of Power—1933." In *Theatre in the Third Reich, The Prewar Years*, ed. Glen W. Gadberry, 1-16. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995.

———. "The Theatre in and of the Third Reich. The German Stage in [entitled] Extremis." In *Essays on 20th Century German Drama and Theater: An American Reception, 1977-1999*, ed. Hellmut Hal Rennert, 133-146. N.Y.: Peter Lang, 2004.

———. "The Theatre of the Third Reich: Issues and Concerns." *Nordic Theatre Studies*—Special International Issue: New Directions in Theatre Research. Proceedings of the XIth FIRT/IFTR Congress, Stockholm, 1989, ed. Willmar Sauter. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1990: 75-78.

———., ed. *Theatre in the Third Reich, the Prewar Years*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995.

Garten, H.D.F. *Modern German Drama*. 2nd ed. London: Methuen, 1964.

Grange, William. "Ordained Hands on the Altar of Art: Gründgens, Hilpert, and Fehling in Berlin." In *Theatre in the Third Reich, the Prewar Years*, ed. Glen W. Gadberry, 75-90. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995.

———. *Partnership in the German Theatre: Zuckmayer and Hilpert, 1925-*

1961. New York: P. Lang Publishing, 1991.

Griffin, Roger. "Staging the Nation's Rebirth: Politics and Aesthetics of Performance in the Context of Fascist Studies." In *Fascism and Theatre, Comparative Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945*, ed. Günter Berghaus, 11-29. Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996.

Grosshans, Henry. *Hitler and the Artists*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983.

Grunberger, Richard. *The Twelve Year Reich: A Social History of Nazi Germany 1933-1945*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

Habicht, Werner. "Shakespeare and Theatre Politics in the Third Reich." In *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture,* ed. Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland, 110-120. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989.

Hay, Julius. *Geboren 1900: Erinnerungen.* Reinbek bei Hamburg: Christian Wegner, 1971.

Hortmann, Wilhelm. *Shakespeare on the German Stage: the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998.

Hostetter, Elisabeth Schulz. *The Berlin State Theater Under the Nazi Regime: A Study of the Administration, Key Productions, and Critical Responses from 1933-1944.* Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004.

Hübner, Zygmunt. *Theater and Politics*. Trans. and ed. Jadwiga Kosicka. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992.

Hull, David Stewart. *Film in the Third Reich.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969.

Jelavich, Peter. *Berlin Cabaret*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993.

Jürgen Fehling der Regisseur. Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1978.

Kühlken, Edda. *Die Klassiker-Inszenierungen von Gustaf Gründgens*. Meisenheim: Hain, 1972.

Kvam, Wayne. "The Nazification of Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater Berlin." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 3 (October 1988): 357-74.

London, John. Introduction to *Theatre Under the Nazis*, ed. John London, 1-53. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000.

———. "Non-German Drama in the Third Reich." In *Theatre Under the Nazis*, ed. John London, 222-261. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000.

———., ed. *Theatre Under the Nazis.* Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press.

Mosse, George L. *The Crisis of German Ideology; Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich.* New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964.

———. *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*. New York: Howard Fertig Inc., 1999.

———., ed. *Nazi Culture*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1966.

Mühr, Alfred. *Mephisto ohne Maske: Gustaf Gründgens, Legende und Wahrheit*. Munich: Langen-Müller, 1981.

———. *Rund um den Gendarmenmarkt von Iffland bis Gründgens.* Hamburg: Gerhard Stalling Verlag, 1965.

Niven, Williams. "The Birth of Nazi Drama?: Thing Plays." In *Theatre Under the Nazis*, ed. John London, 54-95. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000.

Panse, Barbara. "Censorship in Nazi Germany: The Influence of the Reich's Ministry of Propaganda on German Theatre and Drama, 1933-1945," trans. Meg

Mumford. In *Fascism and Theatre; Comparitive Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945,* ed. Günter Berghaus, 140-156. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996.

Patraka, Vivian M. *Spectacular Suffering: Theatre, Fascism, and the Holocaust.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1999.

———. Unnamed paper/discussion presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, Chicago, August 2001 in response to my work.

Patterson, Michael. *Revolution in German Theatre 1900-1933.* Boston: Routledge & Degan Paul, 1981.

Payne, Stanley G. *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*. Madison, WI: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1995.

Petropoulis, Jonathan. *Art as Politics.* Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Pois, Robert A. "German Expressionism in the Plastic Arts and Naziism: A Confrontation of Idealists." *German Life and Letters* 21.3 (April 1968): 204-214.

———., ed. *Race and Race History, and Other Essays by Alfred Rosenberg*. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

Postlewait, Thomas. "From Event to Context to Event: A Problem in Theatre Methodology." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Theatre Research, New York, NY, November 2000.

———. "Writing History Today." *Theatre Survey* 41, no. 2 (November 2000): 83-

106.

——— and Bruce A. McConachie, eds. *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989.

Quadflieg, Will. *Wir spielen immer*. Frankfurt: S. Fisher, 1976.

Rouse, John. *Brecht and the West German Theatre: The Practice and Politics of Interpretation.* Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Research Press, 1989.

Rühle, Günther, ed. *Zeit und Theater Diktatur und Exil: 1933-1945.* Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1974.

Schültke, Bettina. "The Municipal Theatre in Frankfurt-on-the-Main: A Provincial Theatre under National Socialism," trans. Laura Tate and Günter Berghaus. In *Fascism and Theatre; Comparitive Studies on the Aesthetics and Politics of Performance in Europe, 1925-1945,* ed. Günter Berghaus, 157-171. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996.

Shafer, Yvonne. "Nazi Berlin and the Grosses Schauspielhaus." In *Theatre in the Third Reich, The Prewar Years,* ed. Glen W. Gadberry, 103-120. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995.

Sharpe, Lesley. "National Socialism and Schiller." *German Life and Letters,* no. 36 (1982-83): 156-165.

Shirer, William L. *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990.

Sigmund, Anna Maria. *Women of the Third Reich.* Ontario: NDE Publishing, 2000.

Smelser, Ronald. *Robert Ley: Hitler's Labor Front Leader.* New York: Berg

Publishers Ltd., 1988.

Steinweis, Alan E. *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts.* Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1993.

———. "Cultural Eugenics: Social Policy, Economic Reform, and the Purge of Jews from German Cultural Life." In *National Socialist Cultural Policy,* ed. Glenn R. Cuomo, 23-38. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Strobl, Gerwin. *The Swastika and the Stage. German Theatre and Society, 1933-1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007.

Wanderscheck, Hermann. *Deutsche Dramatik der Gegenwart*. Berlin: Bong Verlag, 1938.

Wardetzky, Jutta. *Theaterpolitik in faschistischen Deutschland: Studien und Dokumente*. Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1983.

Welch, David. "Nazi Film Policy: Control, Ideology, and Propaganda." In *National Socialist Cultural Policy,* ed. Glenn R. Cuomo, 95-120. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Willett, John. *The Theatre of the Weimar Republic*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988.

Zortman, Bruce Harold. *Hitler's Theater: Ideological Drama in Nazi Germany.* El Paso, TX: Firestein Books, 1984.